

Catholic Discussion of Seventh-day Adventism



Stephen Korsman

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by Stephen Korsman

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About the author

I was born in December 1975 to a Catholic family in Pretoria, South Africa, with a Catholic history from both my mother's Irish/English side and my father's Dutch side. I have a younger sister, 4 years younger than I am. We were both raised Catholics, and are still active Catholics. My father is a retired land surveyor and town planner, my mother is a retired archaeologist with an interest in the later stone age, and my sister is studying plant genetics. I graduated as a medical doctor in 1999, and, in 2006, finished specialising in medical virology, a branch of the pathology field.

My early search for explanations of religious matters began in depth when I was 13, and discovered a pile of Plain Truth magazines my father read for the different view of the world's current affairs they contained. The first three issues I came across caused me a lot of concern – the Trinity, the state of the dead, and which days we should observe (sabbath, Sunday, Christmas, Easter, Passover, etc.) Naturally, these caused some concern.

I went in search of many different views, and after examining everything I could find in the Bible, the writings of early Christians, and in history books, as well as the views of Catholic teaching from many Catholic and non-Catholic sources, Seventh-day Adventism being a prominent source, I reached the conclusion that all these strange doctrines held by groups like the Worldwide Church of God (at that point I had not yet discovered the many WCG offshoots which I still find fascinating), Adventism, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses were not consistent with the Bible, historical evidence, and the way the early Christians of the first few centuries lived their faith.

In the course of my investigations, I discovered the unpleasant world of anti-Catholicism. I encountered a lot of people who told me I was going to hell because I was Catholic, who claimed I worshipped the pope or Mary, that we believe we earn our way into heaven, and other such nonsense. Adventism, being one of the most vocal groups in the anti-Catholic community, became the initial starting point for a website effort after an eye-opening discussion with an Adventist about the little horn of Daniel 7. I felt that I could help a lot of people by publishing information on issues related to Adventism and Catholicism, and eventually expand into other anti-Catholic arenas, so that people could become aware of the misinformation being spread by the Church's opponents. So far, it seems to have had a good effect, and helped many.

My other theological interests lie in various Churches *sui iuris* of the Catholic Church. In 2001 I discovered the Maronite Catholics and the Syro-Malankara Orthodox. I currently prefer to attend Mass in the Extraordinary Form, aka the Traditional Latin Mass.

Introduction

This book has been compiled from nearly 20 years of articles I have written for what started off as a website for my discussion of Seventh-day Adventism, and which eventually became the blog “Catholic Discussion of Adventism” - <http://blog.theotokos.co.za>. The articles have been placed as chapters in a logical order, and not in the order in which they were written. The articles were also not originally written to flow from one chapter to the next. The reader may therefore notice the effects of this resulting in change in register and tone across 20 years, as they move between chapters, as well as some disjunction between chapters, and some repetition of points made.

In my discussions, I try to not attribute every claim made by individual Adventists to the Seventh-day Adventist church (as they tend to do to the Catholic Church.) My aim is to discuss arguments commonly presented by Adventists and groups of Adventists, because that is what needs to be addressed in order to help people understand where the Adventist claims they hear are in error, and why Catholic teaching is true. Certainly, the official teachings of the Adventist denomination will be refuted in the process, but not all of the crazy theories so often presented by Adventists (and others who have similar beliefs) are official Adventist dogma. However, it's what is out there in the “wild” that I feel needs addressing.

I am not a professional theologian, but I've studied the Bible, and the teachings of the Catholic Church and of the Seventh-day Adventist church, along with the writings of apologists for both, as well as historical documents such as the writings of the early Christians.

The more I've studied the Bible, the more Catholic I've become.

With this book, I hope to help Catholics, Adventists, and those who are neither.

For Catholics, I hope to provide some of the answers they may need when confronted with the claims of Adventists. Catholics may have Adventist family or friends, or just come across Adventist arguments on the internet. I hope that this book can help them understand why Adventism is not biblical, and why Catholic practice and teaching is, and that it can help people avoid falling for Adventist arguments.

For Adventists, I hope to provide some thought about why I, and most of Christianity for 2000 years, do not agree with what Adventism and Adventists claim about what the Bible says. Hopefully Adventists will understand the points I make, and come to agree with them. Conversion, however, is from the Holy Spirit, not from me.

For those who are neither Catholic nor Adventist, I hope that some of the discussions in this book may be of use in further understanding the Bible, Catholic teaching and practice, and Adventism.

So, try to sit back and relax, bring your Bible along to check things in, follow me on my discoveries about Seventh-day Adventism and the Catholic Church, and enjoy reading.

Section 1 – What Catholics Believe

The next two chapters are from a series I began called “What Catholics Believe”. The third chapter in the series can be found in Section 11 (The Virgin Mary).

Chapter 1: What Catholics Believe – Introduction

I have been planning to write a series of posts over the next year or so that will cover some of the major points on which Catholics get hassled by non-Catholics, and in particular by Adventists and other sabbath-keeping groups. Finally I have managed to get round to it.

My intention is to present or explain what the Catholic Church believes, what the biblical evidence is, and why the commonly heard objections are faulty. I will not be writing a complete thesis on each topic, but hope to present the basics of what we believe and why we believe it. I will also not be producing a complete encyclopedia of Catholic teaching, and I will not necessarily be writing on the various topics in any specific order.

I think it's important to address the different ways in which disagreements with Catholic teaching arise.

Types of disagreements with Catholicism

Deliberate misinformation about the Catholic Church

This is not uncommon. A preacher gets up and says “*The Catholic Church teaches X and Y*”, and his congregation sits up and says, “*Wow, let's share that!*”, and don't think to check the facts themselves. Or an anti-Catholic website has lists of supposed dates Catholic teachings were first invented or supposed quotes they portray as being authentic Catholic teaching – often they are not official documents at all, often just newspaper clippings, and those that come from quasi-official sources are often tampered with or selectively quoted to provide the appearance of something else. Those who spread this sort of message often have agendas that they are unwilling to compromise on, and so they are usually unwilling to give the Catholic Church a fair hearing. They'll call any defence of the actual Catholic position a cover-up or an excuse. Beware of these people, and recognise them early, and leave them to their ranting – but know what they do so that you and others don't fall into their traps.

Example: A Catholic newspaper says that the Catholic Church began Sunday observance and that it is not supported by the Bible. Later the article is retracted, but Adventists have seen it and use it to claim that this is the position of the Catholic Church. They ignore the actual statements of the Catholic Church, and use arrogant claims in one newspaper article that was not well informed.

Misunderstandings about what Catholicism actually teaches

Protestants think the Catholic Church teaches or practises X, when the Catholic Church really teaches or practises Y, where Y is, for various reasons, definitely not X. Sometimes this is a legitimate misunderstanding; sometimes it's a deliberate perpetuation of a myth. If the latter, then it's unlikely they will be easily open to accepting that the Church teaches what she claims to teach. What I ask here is that non-Catholic readers try to put aside their prejudices and consider the possibility that when the Church says she teaches or practises Y, she really means it.

Example: Catholics worship Mary. Truth: Catholics do not worship Mary. But it takes a lot of slow,

tedious explaining to get that through to those who don't initially want to listen.

Different interpretations

The Bible says X, and Catholics interpret X to mean one thing, while Protestants interpret X to mean another thing. While in both cases Catholics and Protestants are interpreting the same passage differently, Protestants often argue that they are teaching what the Bible says, and we are not. These Protestants forget that they are actually teaching an interpretation of the Bible, and different interpretations exist. Some interpretations are right, and some interpretations are wrong.

In cases like this, all I am asking of the non-Catholic reader is to acknowledge that we are both trying to interpret the Bible, but we arrive at different conclusions. If we can understand that the other party has interpreted the Bible in their own way, even if different from ours, and even if we disagree, at least we have developed some respect for each other's views as potential interpretations of the Bible.

Protestants insisting that their interpretation is actually what the Bible says, and not merely their interpretation, is not going to convince Catholics, because we can read the Bible and see that the Protestants have actually interpreted it. That will just lead to a breakdown in dialogue.

Be careful of those who claim that they have assurance that their interpretation is correct based on the fact that they have prayed and read the Bible and they know that the Holy Spirit is guiding them. This is just a way for them to distance themselves from having to acknowledge that their views are only interpretations like ours, and often results in them judging those who disagree with them as being lesser Christians. I've come across quite a number who will actually say that they are individually and personally inspired by the Holy Spirit to reach the true understanding of the Bible. Quite something to hear – they condemn the Catholic Church for teaching that the Pope is infallible, and yet they are claiming for themselves something far beyond what we believe about the pope.

Example:

Adventist: *"The Bible teaches that babies should not be baptised."*

Catholic: "That's your interpretation, but many have interpreted the Bible differently."

Adventist: *"No, they're all wrong, I know because I've studied the Bible and prayed about it."*

Catholic: "But so did the other Christians who interpret it differently."

Adventist: *"I know I am guided by the Holy Spirit, so those Christians must be wrong. Perhaps they didn't pray sincerely enough or study hard enough."*

You think that example is extreme? Yes it is. But I've heard it many times. Ideally the discussion should go like this:

Example:

Adventist: *"The Bible teaches that babies should not be baptised."*

Catholic: "That's your interpretation, but many have interpreted the Bible differently."

Adventist: *“Okay – I accept that it’s my interpretation, but it makes sense to me. Other people can read the same passages and interpret them differently and reach a different conclusion. So how can we tell who is right?”*

Chapter 2: What Catholics Believe – Sunday observance

Catholics (and most other Christians) believe Sunday is a special day to be celebrated, because it is the day Jesus rose from the dead.

The Jews kept the sabbath on Saturday, and this is reflected in the 10 Commandments. However, only the moral code of the Old Testament is applicable to Christians – we don't need to sacrifice animals, keep Passover, Yom Kippur, or the sabbath, and we are free from the dietary restrictions as well.

St Paul explicitly stated that the sabbath is not necessary for Christians – Col 2:14-17, Gal 4:10-11. He said that whichever day we keep, we honour God by doing so – Romans 14:5-6. The same passage in Romans permits us to eat whatever we wish – obviously within reason.

The 10 Commandments were the words of the Old Covenant (Deut 4:13, Exod 34:28) and the sabbath was its sign (Exod 31:13-18, Lev 24:8), and the Old Covenant pointed to a better New Covenant. The mediators of the Old Covenant were Moses and the Levitical priesthood.

The New Covenant law is greater (cf. the Sermon on the Mount) than the Old Covenant law. It has Jesus himself as its (our) mediator. The New Covenant is Christ's blood shed for us at Calvary:

Luke 22:20 – Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

Every Sunday, celebrating the Resurrection of Christ, we take part in the New Covenant.

Just as the sabbath looked back to the old creation that turned to sin, and also to the exodus from Egypt as a symbol of our freedom from slavery to sin, so Sunday looks to the new creation that we become in Christ, who freed us from slavery to sin in a far more fundamental way than the exodus. As we say at Mass, “*Dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life: Lord Jesus, come in glory!*”

But Jesus kept the sabbath! Why don't we follow his example?

Well, not everything Jesus did is applicable under the New Covenant. Remember, Jesus lived under the Old Covenant, and obeyed the Old Covenant law perfectly. If we had to do everything Jesus did, we would have the following list to comply with:

- Keep the Passover (lamb and all) – Luke 2:41-42, Luke 22:8, Matt 26:17-19
- Keep the Feast of Tabernacles – John 7
- Keep Hannukah – John 10:22
- Be circumcised – Luke 2:21
- Sacrifice birds – Matt 8:4 – here Jesus commanded a man to go and offer the sacrifice that

Moses commanded – see Leviticus 14, where God tells Moses how to offer such a sacrifice.

Clearly Jesus lived under the Old Covenant, and not everything he did is applicable to us.

So when did Sunday observance begin?

The first evidence of Sunday observance by Christians can be found in the Bible – Acts 20:7 as a single event, and 1 Cor 16:2 as a repeating event.

Several important texts highlight the relevance of Sunday for Christians, which, although not an explicit command, nevertheless points to Sunday's importance given the lack of need to keep Saturday holy. Fellow apologist Bob Stanley has them listed on his page "[Sabbath or Sunday?](#)", and I've quoted his list here –

1. Jesus Christ rose from the dead on Sunday, Lk 24:1-12
2. Christ appeared to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, and celebrated the Eucharist on Sunday, Lk 24:13
3. Jesus appeared to the disciples behind closed doors, Jn 20:19
4. Jesus appeared to the disciples with Thomas one week later, Jn 20:26 NAB
5. Jesus opened the minds of the Apostles to the Scriptures, Lk 24:45
6. The Apostles received their 'Great Commission' to go and teach all nations, Mt 28:1-20.
7. The Apostles were given the Holy Spirit and the power to forgive sins, Jn 20:19-23.
8. Jesus told the Apostles to wait in the city until they were to be clothed with power from on high, Lk 24:49.
9. On the seventh Sunday after the resurrection, the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles, Acts 2:1-4.
10. Immediately after receiving the Holy Spirit, Peter gave a powerful address on the Gospel resulting in 3000 conversions, Acts 2:41.
11. The Apostles met for the Holy Eucharist on the 'first' day, Acts 20:7.
12. The Apostles set the 'first' day of the week for the Churches to take up the collections, 1Cor 16:1-2.

The early Christians recorded in their writings that they kept Sunday, and not the sabbath in the way of the Jews. Three of the earliest records of Sunday observance after the New Testament are:

Ignatius of Antioch, 107 AD: *let every friend of Christ keep the Lord's Day as a festival, the resurrection-day, the queen and chief of all the days of the week.*

– Epistle to the Magnesians, chp 9. Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 1, pg. 62-63.

The Epistle of Barnabas, 70-120 AD: *Wherefore we Christians keep the eighth day for joy, on which also Jesus arose from the dead and when he appeared ascended into heaven.*

– The Epistle of Barnabas, section 15, 100 AD, Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 1, pg. 147

Justin Martyr, 150 AD: *But Sunday is the day on which we hold our common assembly, because it is the first day of the week and Jesus our saviour on the same day rose from*

the dead.

– First apology of Justin, Ch 68

The history of Sunday observance among Christians is clear – sabbath keeping stopped, and Sunday observance began with the earliest of Christians. Exactly how it was observed by Christians has changed with time. Early on there was less focus on resting from work. The focus was on gathering together for the Eucharist. However, the Eucharist was celebrated daily – and still is in Catholic churches around the world. There probably isn't a moment of the day when, somewhere, the Mass is not being said. That means that there is also Mass on Saturday. In the early Church, many Christians had a special fast on Saturdays, because it was the day on which Jesus was in the tomb. Socrates' Ecclesiastical History records some of the variations on how the sabbath fast was practised, or not practised. This passage is often misquoted by Adventists and other sabbath keepers as if it supported Christian sabbath observance in the Jewish/Adventist way. But Socrates is clear that the Christians believed that we were not bound to the sabbath, and such variation therefore was permitted and tolerated. Later, however, in keeping with Matt 16:19 and 18:18, for our benefit the Church laid down specific guidelines on how to observe Sunday. Even so, today there are still a wide variety of practices between all the different rites of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, and some still have the sabbath fast. However, none of them teach that we are bound to the Old Covenant sabbath as taught by Adventists.

Official Catholic teaching is often misrepresented by Adventists, who need to have the papacy and/or the Catholic Church held responsible for changing the law of God. This is one of the most foundational teachings of their denomination, and if it were to collapse they would lose a significant piece of what makes them unique. It would mean their prophetess, Ellen White, had failed. Adventist identity depends, to a large extent, on their demonising the Catholic Church. This makes it hard to reach them when they come preaching their doctrines.

There are many examples on the internet of this sort of misrepresentation. I've dealt with such cases elsewhere. In short, they take statements by Catholics and remove all context, and use them to pretend that the Catholic Church acknowledges that they changed the sabbath to Sunday apart from any decisions by the Apostles. They rarely actually acknowledge official Catholic teaching.

For example, they will quote the Catechism of the Council of Trent, which states:

But the Church of God has thought it well to transfer the celebration and observance of the Sabbath to Sunday.

What does that mean to Catholics? I've gone into some more detail in Chapter 41, but in short, it goes like this:

Catholics believe that the Catholic Church is the original Church established by Jesus and led by the Apostles. Therefore, to Catholics, the Apostles themselves were Catholic. To Catholics, if the Apostles did something, then we can say that the Catholic Church did that thing. Most Protestants would disagree, but please try to understand how we talk. All I ask is that when you read Catholic texts written by Catholics, you try to understand what we are saying, instead of applying your own

definitions for these words to something we have written.

So, when the Catechism of the Council of Trent states “*But the Church of God has thought it well to transfer the celebration and observance of the Sabbath to Sunday*”, it could mean 1) the Catholic Church after the Apostles began Sunday observance, or 2) it could mean that the Catholic Church in the persons of the Apostles began Sunday observance.

Which one is it? Adventists will only quote the one sentence. However, several paragraphs previously, what the Catechism means is clearly explained:

The Jewish Sabbath Changed To Sunday By The Apostles

The Apostles therefore resolved to consecrate the first day of the week to the divine worship, and called it the Lord's day. St. John in the Apocalypse makes mention of the Lord's day; and the Apostle commands collections to be made on the first day of the week, that is, according to the interpretation of St. Chrysostom, on the Lord's day. From all this we learn that even then the Lord's day was kept holy in the Church.

So, an official statement from the Catholic Church – we believe the Apostles made the change. Any paragraph later on in the text needs to take that into account. Unfortunately Adventists are often not willing to acknowledge that.

Another official Catholic source is Pope St John Paul II:

Dies Domini, 21: It was for this reason that, from Apostolic times, “the first day after the Sabbath”, the first day of the week, began to shape the rhythm of life for Christ's disciples (cf. 1 Cor 16:2). “The first day after the Sabbath” was also the day upon which the faithful of Troas were gathered “for the breaking of bread”, when Paul bade them farewell and miraculously restored the young Eutychus to life (cf. Acts 20:7-12). The Book of Revelation gives evidence of the practice of calling the first day of the week “the Lord's Day” (1:10). This would now be a characteristic distinguishing Christians from the world around them. As early as the beginning of the second century, it was noted by Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia, in his report on the Christian practice “of gathering together on a set day before sunrise and singing among themselves a hymn to Christ as to a god”.(19) And when Christians spoke of the “Lord's Day”, they did so giving to this term the full sense of the Easter proclamation: “Jesus Christ is Lord” (Phil 2:11; cf. Acts 2:36; 1 Cor 12:3). Thus Christ was given the same title which the Septuagint used to translate what in the revelation of the Old Testament was the unutterable name of God: YHWH.

Lastly, Adventists turn to Pope Sylvester I, and claim that he fulfils Ellen White's claim that a pope changed the sabbath to Sunday. I've dealt with that claim in more detail in Chapters 42-43, but in short what happened is this:

The local Council of Laodicea decreed the following:

Christians must not judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, rather honouring the Lord's Day; and, if they can, resting then as Christians. But if any shall

be found to be judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ. (Canon 29)

It is uncertain whether Pope Sylvester was even involved. It is uncertain whether or not the council was held during his lifetime, and even if it was, it is uncertain whether or not he was involved with the council.

What the council did was simply to recommend resting, if possible, on Sunday, and condemned the Judaizers who wanted to rest on Saturday. It is far from clear whether or not these particular people felt bound to the sabbath as a biblical command; they were likely amongst those discussed by Socrates, which I mentioned above. It was simply a case of putting a local dispute to rest. Sunday observance was well established at the time, as the Christian writers of the era attest – going back to the beginning, Christian writers had referred to Sunday as the Lord's Day.

So, to sum up, we have seen what the official teaching of the Catholic Church is regarding the origins of Sunday observance. We have seen some of the biblical evidence for Sunday observance and against the idea that the sabbath is a biblical requirement for Christians, and we have seen that the early Christians confirmed in their own words that they kept Sunday.

Further material on this topic:

- [Sabbath and the First Day – Why do Catholics worship on Sunday instead of Saturday?...](#)
By John Hellman
- [Dies Domini: Is Saturday the True Sabbath?...](#) by Jacob Michael
- [Sabbath or Sunday? – The Church Fathers](#) ... Catholic Answers
- [From Sabbath to Sunday – How the Church Moved Its Holy Day](#) ... by James P. Guzek,
This Rock magazine, February 1999
- [Sunday vs. The Sabbath \(audio\)](#) ... Catholic Answers
- [Did the Catholic Church “Change the Sabbath”?](#) (video) ... by Jimmy Akin, YouTube

Section 2: The sabbath

This section deals with all the scriptural passages that Adventists use to argue that the weekly sabbath is obligatory for Christians, and most of the passages in the Bible that can be used to refute the Adventist claims.

I start with three introductory chapters simply listing all the scriptural passages that mention the sabbath or Sunday (New Testament) or need to be addressed (Old Testament). The gist of these is to show that there are no instructions for Christians to keep the sabbath in the New Testament, and to highlight those in the Old Testament that do need addressing due to their use by Adventists.

Specific arguments put forth by Adventists:

- Jesus predicted continued sabbath observance by Christians.
- Jesus said his day was the sabbath, so the correct Lord's Day is the sabbath.
- The apostles set an example for us of sabbath keeping.
- Isaiah says we will keep the sabbath in heaven.
- Christians are still under the Old Covenant law (at least the two parts Adventists want to adhere to – the sabbath and the dietary laws.)

This section will take the reader through the relevant biblical texts used by Adventists to argue their point, and show why Adventists are misinterpreting these passages. We'll also look at relevant passages in the Bible that show why sabbath keeping is not necessary for Christians, and we'll look at the Adventist arguments dealing with these passages.

Chapter 3: What does the Old Testament say?

Adventists and other sabbath keeping Christians often present arguments from the Bible to show that Christians are still expected by God to keep the sabbath day on the 7th day of the week, Saturday (Friday sunset till Saturday sunset.)

They tell us that God gave the sabbath to Adam and Eve, but that's not in the Bible. They tell us that the sabbath was a perpetual sign, which means we must keep it even today – but the Levitical priesthood and circumcision were also perpetual signs, so it's really a case of selective quoting of references that suit the theology of the moment, ignoring the fuller context of the Bible.

My position is this: If you take the verses Adventists use as proof texts, and look at what they actually say, in the context of the verses around them, it soon becomes evident that all the passages have had their context seriously abused. By looking at everything the New Testament says about the sabbath, it becomes clear that not once are Christians told to keep the sabbath, not once do the Apostles keep the sabbath as a witness to us, and the only three times that any Christians *do* keep the sabbath after the resurrection of Christ, they are reprimanded by Paul. What is even more fascinating is that there is only one time when the day of the week when a specific Christian worship service was held is named. And that day? The first day of the week!

Looking at the proof texts Sabbatarians provide from the Old Testament is just as revealing. In context, some texts actually show the very opposite of what Adventists claim they mean.

The Bible translation used throughout is the King James Version. I have tried to keep the verses in sequence, but when one topic is discussed in more than one book, I have brought those passages together.

There are several passages that need to be discussed when we deal with whether or not Christians still need to observe the 7th day sabbath today.

Isaiah 66:23 – And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD.

Gen 2:1-3 – Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

Exod 31:12-13 – And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.

Exod 31:17 – It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.

Deut 5:1-2 – And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.

Nehemiah 9:13-14 – Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant:

Ezek 20:12 – Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them.

Chapters 31-35 will cover these passages.

Chapter 4: What does the New Testament say?

Adventists and other sabbath keeping Christians often present arguments from the New Testament to show that Christians are still expected by God to keep the sabbath day on the 7th day of the week, Saturday (Friday sunset till Saturday sunset.)

They tell us that Jesus kept the sabbath, and therefore so should we. They tell us that Jesus prophesied that Christians would be keeping the sabbath after his death. They even tell us that because Jesus said he is Lord of the sabbath, the sabbath can be termed “the Lord’s Day,” even though there is no other historical or biblical evidence for their position, and plenty against it. Adventists also claim that the Bible shows that the early Christian witness was one of sabbath observance – they show us several texts that they claim shows the Apostles and other Christians keeping the sabbath. That is a huge blow to many Sunday-keeping Christians who believe in following the practices of the Apostles, serving God the way the early Christians did.

Or it would be – were it true. If you take the verses Adventists use as proof texts, and look at what they actually say, in the context of the verses around them, it soon becomes evident that all the passages have had their context seriously abused. By looking at everything the New Testament says about the sabbath, it becomes clear that not once are Christians told to keep the sabbath, not once do the Apostles keep the sabbath as a witness to us, and the only three times that any Christians *do* keep the sabbath after the resurrection of Christ, they are reprimanded by Paul. What is even more fascinating is that there is only one time when the day of the week when a specific Christian worship service was held is named. And that day? The first day of the week!

Considering the impressive lack of commentary by the New Testament on the importance of keeping the sabbath, considering its absolute silence on the necessity of keeping the sabbath, where do Adventists get their sabbath theology from? Certainly not the New Testament. They are simply carrying over into New Testament times something from the Old Testament that the New Testament doesn’t give the same emphasis to. I wonder how an Adventist can read the Bible and find the Adventist sabbath message there without looking through the tinted spectacles of Adventism, without reading Adventism into the Bible.

In this essay, I want to list all the verses in the New Testament that mention the sabbath. Some do not discuss the principle of sabbath observance, and I will deal with those directly in this essay. Where a verse does discuss sabbath observance, I will usually discuss that in a separate chapter.

I have tried to keep the verses in sequence, but when one topic is discussed in more than one book, I have brought those passages together.

The sabbath in the New Testament

Matt 12:8 – [For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.](#)

Mark 2:23-24,27-28 – [And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. And the](#)

Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? ... And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

Luke 6:1-2,5-7,9 – And it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands. And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath days ... And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath. And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him. ... Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?

Chapter 10 deals with these verses.

Matt 24:20 – But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day.

Chapter 11 deals with this verse.

Matt 28:1 – In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher.

Mark 15:42 – And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath,

Mark 16:1 – And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

Luke 23:54 – And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on.

Luke 23:56 – And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.

John 19:31 – The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was a high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

Sometimes Sabbatarians claim that these were Christians who had just rested on the sabbath ... they forget that Jesus had not yet risen from the dead when they were keeping that sabbath – man was still living under the Mosaic Law, and since Jesus had not risen from the dead, there could obviously not be any other day they could think of to keep.

Mark 1:21 – And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught.

Jesus had not yet died and risen from the dead – this refers to the Old Covenant, the Mosaic Law, and can't be used to argue for sabbath observance by Christians who live after the change in Covenant.

Mark 3:2 – And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him.

Mark 3:4 – And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.

Mark 6:2 – And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?

Again, Jesus had not yet risen from the dead, and so these passages can't be used to argue for sabbath observance by Christians who live after the change in Covenant.

Luke 4:16 – And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

Luke 4:31 – And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days.

Chapter 12 covers these verses.

Luke 13:10 – And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath.

Luke 13:14-16 – And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day. The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?

Luke 14:1 – And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched him.

Luke 14:3 – And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful

to heal on the sabbath day?

Luke 14:5 – And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?

John 5:9-10 – And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath. The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.

John 5:16 – And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day.

John 5:18 – Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

John 9:14 – And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.

John 9:16 – Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.

Again, Jesus had not yet risen from the dead, and so these passages can't be used to argue for sabbath observance by Christians who live after the change in Covenant.

John 7:22-23 – Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man. If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?

Chapter 13 discusses this passage.

Acts 1:12 – Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.

Chapter 25 deals with this verse.

Acts 13:14 – But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.

Acts 13:27 – For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him.

Acts 13:42 – And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.

Acts 13:44 – And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

Chapter 26 deals with this passage.

Acts 15:21 – For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

Chapter 27 deals with this verse.

Acts 16:13 – And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.

Chapter 28 deals with this verse.

Acts 17:2 – And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures,

Chapter 29 deals with this verse.

Acts 18:4 – And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

Chapter 30 deals with this verse.

Col 2:16 – Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days.

Chapters 15-17 deal with this verse.

The Seventh Day in the New Testament

Heb 4:4 – For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.

Chapter 20 deals with this chapter.

Sunday in the New Testament

Matt 28:1 – In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher.

Mark 16:2 – And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun.

Mark 16:9 – Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.

Luke 24:1 – Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.

John 20:1 – The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulcher.

John 20:19 – Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

Chapter 14 deals with these verses.

Acts 20:7 – And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

Chapter 24 deals with this verse.

1 Cor 16:2 – Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

Chapters 21-23 deal with this verse.

Chapter 5: The sabbath in the Gospels

Adventists tell us that the Bible commands sabbath keeping for Christians.

All the verses mentioning the sabbath in the New Testament (apart from the Gospels) have been listed in the previous chapter.

Not one commands sabbath observance, and not one gives an example of Christians keeping the sabbath.

I often get told that Jesus set the example we are to follow. But if we do all the things Jesus did under the Old Covenant, we need to do the following:

- Keep the Passover (lamb and all) – Luke 2:41-42, Luke 22:8, Matt 26:17-19
- Keep the Feast of Tabernacles – John 7
- Keep Hannukah – John 10:22
- Be circumcised – Luke 2:21
- Sacrifice birds – Matt 8:4 – here Jesus commanded a man to go and offer the sacrifice that Moses commanded – see Leviticus 14, where God tells Moses how to offer such a sacrifice.

Clearly Jesus lived under the Old Covenant, and NOT everything he did is applicable to us.

These are the verses from the four Gospels. (For saving space, the verses are cited but not quoted in full.)

- Matt 12:1 – picking corn in a neighbour's field was okay (Deut 23:25) but what about on the sabbath? Even collecting manna on the sabbath was prevented. Jesus cites David eating the shewbread (verse 4) which was not on the sabbath, and the priests working on the sabbath. But it's a clear change of what may or may not be done – going from not collecting manna to permitting picking of grain. No command to keep the sabbath.
- Matt 12:2 – see above. No command to keep the sabbath.
- Matt 12:5 – see above. None of these three verses has a command to keep the day.
- Matt 12:8 – Jesus is Lord over the sabbath – see Chapter 14 for a full discussion of this verse. No command to keep the sabbath.
- Matt 12:10 – healing on the sabbath. No command to keep the sabbath.
- Matt 12:11 – rescuing sheep on the sabbath. No command to keep the sabbath.
- Matt 12:12 – doing good on the sabbath. No command to keep it after his resurrection. He is giving a lesson on the relationship of the law to man, not commanding the sabbath.
- Matt 24:20 – See Chapter 11 for a full discussion of this verse. No command at all to keep the sabbath. Some Adventists interpret fleeing for one's life as profaning the sabbath, with Jesus telling them to pray not to have to.
- Matt 28:1 – mention of the day in the context of the events of Jesus' crucifixion. No

command to keep the sabbath.

- Mark 1:21 – Jesus taught in the synagogue, which would not have been filled on other days. Just because he kept the sabbath under the Old Covenant, doesn't mean we should under the New. No command here for sabbath keeping.
- Mark 2:23 – parallel passage to Matt 12 – see above. No command to keep the sabbath anywhere here.
- Mark 2:24 – parallel passage to Matt 12 – see above. No command to keep the sabbath anywhere here.
- Mark 2:27 – parallel passage to Matt 12 – see above. No command to keep the sabbath anywhere here.
- Mark 2:28 – parallel passage to Matt 12 – see above. No command to keep the sabbath anywhere here.
- Mark 3:2 – parallel passage to Matt 12 – see above. No command to keep the sabbath anywhere here.
- Mark 3:4 – parallel passage to Matt 12 – see above. No command to keep the sabbath anywhere here.
- Mark 6:2 – similar passage to Mark 1:21. No command to keep the sabbath anywhere here.
- Mark 15:42 – mention of the day in the context of the events of Jesus' crucifixion. No command to keep the sabbath.
- Mark 16:1 – mention of the day in the context of the events of Jesus' crucifixion. No command to keep the sabbath.
- Luke 4:16 – Note the important use of the word CUSTOM, discussed in detail in Chapter 12. Jesus taught in the synagogue, which would not have been filled on other days. Just because he kept the sabbath under the Old Covenant, doesn't mean we should under the New. No command here for sabbath keeping.
- Luke 4:31 – Jesus taught in the synagogue, which would not have been filled on other days. Just because he kept the sabbath under the Old Covenant, doesn't mean we should under the New. No command here for sabbath keeping.
- Luke 6:1 – parallel passage to Matt 12 – see above. No command to keep the sabbath anywhere here.
- Luke 6:2 – parallel passage to Matt 12 – see above. No command to keep the sabbath anywhere here.
- Luke 6:5 – parallel passage to Matt 12 – see above. No command to keep the sabbath anywhere here.
- Luke 6:6 – parallel passage to Matt 12 – see above. No command to keep the sabbath anywhere here.
- Luke 6:7 – parallel passage to Matt 12 – see above. No command to keep the sabbath anywhere here.
- Luke 6:9 – parallel passage to Matt 12 – see above. No command to keep the sabbath anywhere here.

- Luke 13:10 – Jesus taught in the synagogue, which would not have been filled on other days. Just because he kept the sabbath under the Old Covenant, doesn't mean we should under the New. No command here for sabbath keeping.
- Luke 13:14 – healing on the sabbath. No command here for sabbath keeping.
- Luke 13:15 – rescuing ox/ass on the sabbath. No command here for sabbath keeping.
- Luke 13:16 – healing on the sabbath. No command here for sabbath keeping.
- Luke 14:1 – healing on the sabbath. No command here for sabbath keeping.
- Luke 14:3 – healing on the sabbath. No command here for sabbath keeping.
- Luke 14:5 – rescuing ox/ass on the sabbath. No command here for sabbath keeping.
- Luke 23:54 – mention of the day in the context of the events of Jesus' crucifixion. No command to keep the sabbath.
- Luke 23:56 – resting on the sabbath under the Old Covenant. Sabbatarians forget that Jesus had not yet risen from the dead when they were keeping that sabbath – man was still living under the Mosaic Law, and since Jesus had not risen from the dead, there could obviously not be any other day they could think of to keep. No command to keep the sabbath.
- John 5:9 – healing on the sabbath. No command to keep the sabbath.
- John 5:10 – carrying a bed on the sabbath. Jer 17:22 – God separates carrying burdens from actual work-related burdens; both are prohibited. Obviously a lesson in sabbath keeping. But it's a clear change of what may or may not be done. No command to keep the sabbath.
- John 5:16 – Jesus persecuted for his views on the sabbath. No command to keep the sabbath.
- John 5:18 – John here reports what Jesus had done – broken the sabbath and claimed equality with God. He's not reporting the views of the Jews; he's stating what Jesus had done to anger them. No command to keep the sabbath.
- John 7:22 – circumcision on the sabbath. The claim that Jesus would have said that the sabbath would no longer be kept by Christians if that were to be the case fails because here he could have said the same about circumcision, and we KNOW it was the case with circumcision. Why did Jesus remain silent? Because his lesson was in the context of the Old Covenant. No command to keep the sabbath.
- John 7:23 – healing and circumcision on the sabbath. No command to keep the sabbath.
- John 9:14 – healing on the sabbath. No command to keep the sabbath.
- John 9:16 – miracles on the sabbath. No command to keep the sabbath.
- John 19:31 – mention of the day in the context of the events of Jesus' crucifixion. No command to keep the sabbath.

So, where in the New Testament do we find a command to keep the sabbath? Nowhere.

Did Jesus command us to keep the sabbath? No.

Did the Apostles command us to keep the sabbath? No.

Did Jesus keep the sabbath? Yes, under the Old Covenant. He was also circumcised, kept Passover,

Hannukah, and commanded a sacrifice to be made. If we recognise the context, we realise that his sabbath keeping was part of the law he lived under.

Chapter 6: Matt 5 – will the law never pass away?

Matt 5:17-20 – Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Luke 16:16-17 – The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.

Matt 5:17-19 is actually a key verse for refuting the Adventist position. Jesus says that not one jot or tittle will pass from the law UNTIL all is fulfilled. This implies that a point WILL come when ALL IS fulfilled. Let's look at texts like Heb 7:12, 2 Cor 3:6-14; Heb 7:12; John 19:28-3, and Acts 15 (where a law given directly by God to Abraham, and called a perpetual law for ALL Abraham's generations, is abolished by a council of the Church.) Here we get told directly that the law HAS changed (those are the words straight from Hebrews,) so we HAVE to wonder what Jesus meant. He said the heavens and the earth would be replaced with a NEW heaven and a NEW earth in that text, and only THEN could the law change, and here we see the law has changed ALREADY ... so what he said MUST have come to pass ... so, did we just miss the end of the world, or not?

Well, we need to understand what this expression MEANT – not what we assume it means when we, in the 21st century, read it with no background in the linguistic expressions of the first century. So, we turn to John 19:28-30, where Jesus actually states that ALL IS FULFILLED. So, if all was fulfilled THEN, we can expect to see the law changing, falling away – and that is exactly what happens. If we turn to Heb 9:26, we see that Jesus came at the END of an age ... so, if this was the end of an age, surely we can interpret the new heavens and new earth to mean exactly what the people of that time understood by it – that a new age began, starting from the Cross. A new creation began then, as we are told in 2 Cor 5:17, Gal 6:15, 1 Cor 15:22+45, and Eph 2:10.

2 Corinthians 5:17 – Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.

Galatians 6:15 – For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

1 Corinthians 15:22, 45 – For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ... (45) Thus it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

Ephesians 2:10 – For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus. (Revised Standard Version)

So, if we ask the crucial question, have the heavens and the earth really passed away, the answer is – YES IT HAS! Those who want to promote the sabbath conveniently ignore the real meaning of this phrase, and try to mislead us by making us read the English literally, while knowing that the original was not written in English, and the people of the time did not have the same idiomatic expressions.

For those who disagree, either Heb 7:12 is wrong and Matt 5:17-19 is wrong ... OR Jesus is right in John 19 when he says that his saving work IS indeed completed. See also Luke 16:16, which says that the law and the prophets lasted until John the Baptist.

Just a note on Acts 15 – God also refers to circumcision as a perpetual covenant in Genesis 17:11-13, to incense as one in Exod 30:8, to the Levitical priesthood as one in Exod 29:9. All these so-called perpetual covenants have been done away with at the cross. Just because they are called perpetual covenants does not mean that their purpose will never come to an end. Circumcision was for ALL Abraham's generations, yet although we are part of that people, circumcision is not necessary for Christians. The same goes for the sabbath.

So we can take all the criteria for the passing of the law, and prove from the New Testament that these criteria ARE fulfilled, and that the law HAS passed away. It's right there in the Bible, if you look around a bit, and place things in the broader context of the entire Bible.

Chapter 7: Matt 5 vs Heb 7 - who is right?

Matthew 5 says not one jot or tittle will pass from the law until all is fulfilled and until the heavens and earth pass away. Adventists claim, then, that the sabbath law is still in effect.

Matt 5:18 – For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

That needs to be interpreted in light of what the Bible says about the law changing and when Jesus came to earth.

Hebrews 7:12 says that the law has changed.

Heb 7:12 – For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

2 Corinthians 3:3-11 says that the 10 commandments have been replaced with a greater law, the ministration of the spirit. So, according to Matt 5 and Heb 7 taken together, a) all has been fulfilled, and b) the heavens and earth have passed away, and c) the law has changed.

Heavens and earth have passed away?

We need to understand this in terms of Jewish idiomatic expressions of the time. It didn't mean an astronomical event. It meant something big, like the end of an age.

Hebrews 9:26 says Jesus came at the end of an age.

Hebrews 8:6-9 says the old covenant was replaced by the new covenant.

That satisfies that condition.

All has been fulfilled?

On the cross, Jesus said "*It is finished.*" Adventists add onto that "*for now*" – they believe it continued later, starting in 1844 and leading up to the end of the world. But in Heb 10:12, Jesus sat down, indicating completion.

This means that the two criteria for jots and tittles passing from the law have been fulfilled, biblically.

The law changed. We are under a different law. The covenant changed. We are under a different, better, covenant, and since the 10 commandments were the words of the Old Covenant, we can expect a better law under a better covenant, and 2 Cor 3:3-11 indicates that.

Chapter 8: A sabbath commandment in Revelation?

Adventists sometimes claim that Revelation shows sabbath keeping by Christians.

There is no mention of the sabbath in the entire book of Revelation. Adventists base their claim on their idea that God's commandments, for Christians, remain the Old Covenant law, specifically the 10 commandments. I've dealt with why this is incorrect in Chapters 38-40.

Adventists cite Rev 12:17 as an example of sabbath keeping instructed in Revelation:

Rev 12:17 – *And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

To Adventists, the "*testimony of Jesus Christ*" is a synonym for their prophetess, Ellen White.

The only "*commandments*" they recognise are the 10 commandments. They ignore the fact that there are many laws called "*commandments*" in the books of Moses outside the 10 commandments, and they ignore passages like 1 Corinthians 14:37, where commandments to Christians are not the 10 commandments.

Jesus gave new commandments. He took the 10 commandments, and expanded on their moral principles in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7). And he said:

John 13:34-35 – *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

John 15:10-12 – *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.*

Ask an Adventist what the greatest law is, and they'll tell you it's the sabbath commandment. Ask an Adventist what the sign is that we are Jesus' disciples, and they'll tell you it is keeping the sabbath.

That's not what Jesus said above.

Jesus said that the greatest commandments in the Old Testament were two found outside the 10 commandments, in what Adventists consider to be the ceremonial law – Deut 6:4-5 and Lev 19:18:

Matt 22:35-39 – *Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy*

mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Passages like Rev 12:17 need to be interpreted in that light. The law changed (Heb 7:12). Jesus gave a new law. The greatest commandments in the old law were not in the 10 commandments, but in Deut 6:4-5 and Lev 19:18. Jesus gave a new commandment – love one another as I have loved you. We are under a new law, not the old law that ended at the cross. And nowhere in the new law are we told to keep the sabbath, or are we given an example by the Apostles of sabbath keeping.

Chapter 9: It is finished – the law, the sabbath

Something I wanted to develop for sometime, because it is only partly dealt with in Chapter 6 on Matthew 5, is whether or not the law has been fulfilled, and whether the heavens and earth have passed away.

There I quote the following:

2 Corinthians 5:17 – Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.

Galatians 6:15 – For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

1 Corinthians 15:22, 45 – For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ... (45) Thus it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being’; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

Ephesians 2:10 – For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus. (Revised Standard Version)

Teresa Beem goes further with more discussion of “*For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled*” (Matt 5:18) in her blog post [The Sabbath, It is Finished](#):

Seventh-day Adventists believe that in these two texts Jesus was speaking of the fulfilment of all things at the Second Coming. That the law given to the Hebrews at Sinai is still in effect (at least some aspects of it) for Christians today because the Kingdom hasn’t yet come. According to Adventists, not a jot or tittle can be changed because at the Cross, all things were not fulfilled, God’s Kingdom did not come.

She also points to “*I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom*” (Matt 26:29) and shows when Jesus actually did do just that.

Chapter 10: Mark 2/Matt 12/Luke 6 – was the sabbath made for all mankind to keep?

Mark 2:23-24 – And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?

Mark 2:27-28 – And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

Matt 12:1-2 – At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were hungry, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.

Matt 12:6-12 – But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple. But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day. And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue: And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him. And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.

Luke 6:5 – And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

Luke 6:9 – Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?

Adventists claim that these passages show that the sabbath is still in effect, and Christians are obliged to keep it. They claim that Mark 2:27, in saying that the sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath, proves that the sabbath was not given to Israel alone, but to all mankind.

They are taking the verse out of context. If one goes back and read the entire passage along with verse 27, one sees that Jesus was not speaking about whether or not the sabbath was made for Jews or for all mankind for all ages and in all places. Jesus was accused of breaking the law in many places in the Bible, and the sabbath was one they often picked on him for – here he is pointing out that the purpose of the sabbath is to serve man, not a case of man being made to glorify the sabbath. By removing the verse from its context, sabbath keepers turn the meaning around. This is a well-documented logical fallacy, called the false dichotomy. The verse, out of context, is presented as presenting two points (the false dichotomy) – the sabbath was made for man, or the sabbath was made for Jews. But in context, the actual dichotomy is between the legalist/Pharisee perspective (the sabbath was more important than those keeping it) and Jesus' perspective (the sabbath was made to serve those keeping it.)

When Jesus said that the sabbath was made for man, he was NOT contrasting mankind with Judaism. He was contrasting the LAW with MAN ... what he was saying is that the LAW was made to serve MAN, NOT man being made to keep the law. There is NOTHING about Jews or Israel AT ALL in this text ... Adventists are reading something into the text that is not there, and, by removing a statement from its context, making it say something that doesn't even fit into the actual context at all. The Old Testament is explicit – the sabbath was made for Israel, and is explicitly called the sign of the Old Covenant. We all know that this was abolished at the Cross. And the Old Testament also tells us clearly that the sabbath was given to MOSES, and NOT before the time of Moses. That alone proves that the sabbath was not given to ALL mankind, because Adam, Noah, and Abraham never knew of it or kept it. See Chapters 31, 34, and 35 for more info on that.

Jesus is not saying that Christians must keep the sabbath. That is taking Jesus' words out of context. Does Jesus actually preach anywhere about the future Christian Church and the laws it must keep? Such an idea is not found ANYWHERE in this passage, or in the New Testament. What Jesus is doing is instructing the sabbath-keeping Jews of his day on how to deal with God's law. They were legalistic, and put the law above love and mercy. Jesus is turning that around, and saying that the sabbath God gave them is not meant as an end in its own right, but as a means to serve mankind. Jesus is explaining that the sabbath is a means for grace and mercy, and not what the Pharisees made it into – the holy of holies, the final end of Jewish worship. This principle is equally valid in ALL Christian denominations. There is nothing at all in the text to suggest that Jesus is proclaiming that the sabbath will continue. He is merely using a real problem of the time to expound a principle of mercy.

Jesus is actually discussing the law as a whole here – my reasoning is twofold. First, the Pharisees were always trying to find him breaking the law – the sabbath, hand-washing, and so forth – and so this is just one of the several instances where Jesus gives us insight into the true nature and purpose of the law. Second, Jesus actually gives another example of law-breaking unrelated to the sabbath – David was so hungry he ate a certain bread that could not be eaten by anyone other than the high priest. This has nothing to do with the sabbath, yet Jesus uses this example to prove that the law exists to serve man, not man to serve the law. Based on this, I feel that Jesus is not promoting the sabbath at all here, and this passage actually does not deal with the sabbath's implications for Christians. All that Jesus is doing is showing, using two contemporary examples, how the law is meant to be used. So he is not making a statement at all about who the sabbath was given to – Israel versus mankind. The Bible has already spoken on that – the sabbath was for Israel. What Jesus is saying – as I see it – is not about mankind's relationship with the sabbath, but the relationship between PEOPLE and the sabbath – did people have to serve the sabbath or did the sabbath exist to serve the people Jesus was speaking to? And this is just one of several examples used to show the nature of the law.

What of the statements that Jesus is Lord of the sabbath? Adventists want the text so say that because Jesus is “Lord even of the sabbath”, it means that it is his special day. But just go back and read the entire passage – it actually is saying that Jesus is ABOVE the law, that it is HE who determines when a law is applicable, and when it is legalistic. Basically, the text is saying NOT that

Jesus' special day is the sabbath, but that Jesus is Lord OVER the sabbath JUST as he is Lord over every other aspect of nature, the law, and the universe, and he controls it completely.

Circumcision too was made for man, and not man for circumcision.

Chapter 11: Matt 24 – pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day?

Matt 24:3 – And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

Matt 24:15-21 – When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand;) Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! [20] But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Adventists and other sabbath observers claim that verse 20 in this passage shows that Jesus foretold the keeping of the sabbath by Christians. To walk too far on the sabbath was to break the sabbath, and Christians should pray not to break the sabbath by having to flee Jerusalem on that day. Even today, several of these groups frown on walking an excessive distance, and consider it to be work, and therefore constituting a breaking of the sabbath commandment.

But is that really what Jesus meant? He, who permitted the saving of a sheep's life on the sabbath by pulling it from a pit, who told the paralysed man to get up and carry away his bed on the sabbath, said we should pray not to have to break the sabbath by saving our own lives? Isn't that just a little absurd?

To get to an understanding of what Jesus really meant, all we need to do to find the answer is look at history, and look at the other examples Jesus uses in that verse, and then examine the actual context – what was Jesus really talking about?

This prophecy refers primarily to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD, but may also refer to future events near the end of time.

First, Jesus knew that the Pharisees locked the gates to Jerusalem (and other cities) on the sabbath to prevent people from walking too far, which was considered work. Therefore, anyone in Jerusalem at the time the Romans attacked, if that day were a sabbath, would be locked in and would not be able to flee. Jesus cannot be telling us that we may not save our lives by fleeing on the sabbath, because he himself said we could heal on the sabbath. So if sabbath keepers were following his own example, they would not have a problem with saving their lives by fleeing on the sabbath – they would have a proper perspective, and have no qualms with running away. Jesus knew that the gates would be locked on the sabbath and they would not be able to escape – and this is why they had to be concerned, but because it was contrary to God's law to walk too far to save your life on that day.

Second, we get to the other examples of things they should hope/pray to avoid. If we draw a parallel between them, and compare them, we see they all follow the same pattern. Winter ... a physical problem making travel unpleasant and difficult and more dangerous due to extreme cold, not disobedience to God's law if they travelled in winter. Pregnancy ... the further into pregnancy you go, the more difficult it becomes to run, hide, and sleep in the bush – a physical problem, and not disobedience to God's law to travel while pregnant. Having a young child – they are difficult to control, to care for, and are more vulnerable to the elements, and no parent would want to put a child through the physical and emotional trauma of running away from soldiers – again, a physical problem, and not disobedience to God. So ... when we get to the sabbath, do we classify it as a physical problem (locked gates, pregnancy, nursing young children) or do we really believe that Christ is saying that his followers should pray not to have to offend him by fleeing certain death on the sabbath, when Jesus told the Jews it was not unlawful to heal and save lives and even pick grain or fish a sheep out of a hole on the sabbath?

Is Jesus really upholding the laws of the Pharisees here, and are we expected to live by these laws too?

I believe that the Adventist position goes against the principle of the Gospel. Jesus was not contradicting his own teaching, and proclaiming that we should worry about breaking the sabbath by fleeing for our lives. He was simply being practical. So, then, should we.

Chapter 12: Luke 4 – did Jesus set an example of sabbath keeping for us?

Luke 4:14-16 – And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

Luke 4:28-31 – And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way, And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days.

Sabbatarians tell us that we must do as Christ did, since he is our example. They point to these passages to show that we need to keep the sabbath. Yet, although Christ was circumcised, most Sabbatarians don't teach that circumcision is compulsory for Christians.

These are texts that supports the idea that Christians did NOT keep the sabbath. You just need to look at context. Luke is writing to ... who? The Gentile Christians. So, why does he have to actually mention in his text that it was Jesus' *custom* to go to the synagogue on the sabbath. Jesus lived under the Old Covenant, and naturally he observed the sabbath. Any sabbath observance that Jesus did would have to explained to people who did not keep the sabbath and who were unfamiliar with it. And therefore, when we see that Jesus' sabbath visit to the synagogue was actually explained, we need to ask *why* it needed to be explained. And, if we look at what the Bible and history show about first century Gentile Christians, we see that Luke needed to explain Jesus' sabbath customs because the Christian Gentiles were not familiar with the sabbath at all. So, surprise! The text used to prove that Jesus went to the synagogue on the sabbath, actually helps prove that Christians do NOT need to do that!

There is nothing in this text to even suggest that future Christians ought to keep the sabbath at all.

Chapter 13: John 7 – circumcision on the sabbath

John 7:22-23 – Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man. If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?

God also refers to circumcision as a perpetual covenant in Genesis 17:11-13, to incense as one in Exod 30:8, to the Levitical priesthood as one in Exod 29:9. All these so-called perpetual covenants have been done away with at the cross. Just because they are called perpetual covenants does not mean that their purpose will never come to an end. Circumcision was for all Abraham's generations, yet although we are part of that people, circumcision is not necessary for Christians. The same goes for the sabbath.

The sabbath was made for man, and so was circumcision. They served their purpose, and Acts 15 tells us we need not circumcise any longer, and Col 2:16 and other texts tell us the same about the sabbath.

Chapter 14: Matt 28/Mark 16/Luke 24/John 20 – Easter weekend and the sabbath / first day

The first day of the week – Jesus' resurrection

Matt 28:1 – In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher.

Mark 16:2 – And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun.

Mark 16:9 – Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.

John 20:1 – The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulcher.

John 20:19 – Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

John 20:26-28 – And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace, be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

Luke 24:1 – Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.

Luke 24:29-30 – But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and broke, and gave to them.

Bob Stanley, [in his essay on the sabbath](#), summarises the biblical references to important events on the first day of the week.

1. Jesus Christ rose from the dead on Sunday, Lk 24:1-12
2. Christ appeared to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, and celebrated the Eucharist on Sunday, Lk 24:13
3. Jesus appeared to the disciples behind closed doors, Jn 20:19
4. Jesus appeared to the disciples with Thomas one week later, Jn 20:26 NAB
5. Jesus opened the minds of the Apostles to the Scriptures, Lk 24:45
6. The Apostles received their 'Great Commission' to go and teach all nations, Mt 28:1-20.
7. The Apostles were given the Holy Spirit and the power to forgive sins, Jn 20:19-23.
8. Jesus told the Apostles to wait in the city until they were to be clothed with power from on high, Lk 24:49.

9. On the seventh Sunday after the resurrection, the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles, Acts 2:1-4.
10. Immediately after receiving the Holy Spirit, Peter gave a powerful address on the Gospel resulting in 3000 conversions, Acts 2:41.
11. The Apostles met for the Holy Eucharist on the 'first' day, Acts 20:7
12. The Apostles set the 'first' day of the week for the Churches to take up the collections, 1Cor 16:1-2.

Some Adventists try to avoid accepting that Jesus appeared on the Sunday of his resurrection, and the Sunday after that. But Luke 24:29 is pretty explicit that this was STILL Sunday. Look at the wording. In my RSV, it says that "it is TOWARD evening and the day is far spent." This says that the day is NEARLY over, but still the same day ... not yet Monday, sunset has not yet passed. This is a desperate attempt to defuse the evidence by destroying ANY Sunday visits by Jesus. But the Bible again proves the Adventist position wrong.

Adventists often argue that if there was to be no more sabbath observance, it would have to be mentioned by Christ, since it was such a major change. Obviously a weak argument considering the scriptural evidence that does eliminate sabbath keeping by Christians, evidence they want badly to avoid, but also a weak argument because of the fact that the Bible requires no such explicit mention by Jesus for something to be true.

Go and read the following texts: John 14:25-26, Luke 12:12, and Matt 28:30. Then read Acts 15. Do you come away with the impression that Jesus revealed everything to the Church BEFORE he died? Was the truth about circumcision known to the Apostles BEFORE Jesus died? If so, what nonsense is John 14:25-26 telling is when it says (Jesus' words) that the Holy Spirit would teach the church? Sure, it says they would remember, but it ALSO says teach, which implies things not yet known. And Acts 15 – is it nonsense that they had to discuss how to manage the Gentile circumcision problem? Surely, if the Adventist claim is anything to go by, there should have been no debate, because they would have known all along? Obviously, the Church was not given the entire revelation in one day. It was given over the lifetime of the Apostles, to whom the Holy Spirit was only given later at Pentecost.

God gives the sabbath law to Moses in the Old Testament and says that it is a perpetual sign for all generations. God gives the circumcision law to Abraham long before that, and says also that it is a perpetual sign for all generations. Jesus never instructed the Apostles or gave them permission to change or abolish the circumcision law. He never did that for the sabbath either. By these Adventist arguments, the Church and the Apostles in Acts 15 had no right to make the decision they made. Jesus had not instructed it, and circumcision was an eternal sign for all generations to come. But they did it, and we believe they were right to do so. That means that they had just as much right to do exactly the same with the sabbath, especially considering that the Old Testament is quite clear that the sabbath was meant as a sign for the Mosaic Covenant, which passed away at the Cross.

Chapter 15: Col 2:14-17 – does this refer to the 7th day sabbath?

Col 2:13-17 – And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

Paul starts by mentioning that the law is nailed to the cross, and he goes on to mention a few laws as examples. One law that he mentions is the sabbath. Sabbatarians try to argue that this word does not mean the 7th day sabbath in this context. That argument is unscriptural and illogical for two main reasons.

First, the word used is the word used to describe the sabbath. This word is not used to describe other days, outside the five books of Moses. After the time Moses wrote the books, the word sabbath lost the meaning that it had in terms of other days, and became used exclusively for the 7th day sabbath. Only in the earliest times were these days called sabbaths. After that they were called holy days.

Adventists sometimes claim that Col 2:16 uses the plural for the sabbath, and claim that this shows that it cannot be the weekly sabbath. The issue of whether the word is singular or plural is totally irrelevant, because there are many places in the Bible where the plural and the singular are used, BOTH describing a single Saturday, not even describing several Saturdays, certainly not describing a collection of holy days. Col 2:16 uses the word just as the rest of the Bible does – to mean the 7th day sabbath. To claim otherwise is to ignore the meaning of the word used and its place in the language and grammar of the time.

Paul would never refer to these annual holy days as “*sabbaths*” because this was not the word's usage or meaning in the language in which he wrote. Since the Greek and Hebrew language of their day did not use the word “*sabbath*” to describe these days, the Sabbatarian argument is flawed.

Secondly, the whole term used refers to festivals and new moons and sabbaths. Take a look at all the times when this and similar phrases are used, phrases listing various types of religious days. Each and every time, this term refers to the religious days observed under the Old Covenant. And if you look at what each subsection in the phrase means, you see that festivals are the yearly holy days (Passover, Pentecost, Yom Kippur, Trumpets, etc.), the new moons are the monthly observance of the new moon, and the sabbath is the only thing left – exactly what the word meant in the language of the time – the 7th day of the week.

Since he lists the annual festivals and the sabbath separately, the word “*sabbaths*” clearly cannot mean “*annual festivals*” because then he would be writing redundantly, and sound silly. Comparing

the phrase to similar uses throughout the Bible, this construct includes the annual, monthly, and weekly observances of the Old Covenant.

1 Chron 23:31 – And to offer all burnt sacrifices unto the LORD in the sabbaths, in the new moons, and on the set feasts, by number, according to the order commanded unto them, continually before the LORD:

2 Chron 2:4 – Behold, I build a house to the name of the LORD my God, to dedicate it to him, and to burn before him sweet incense, and for the continual shewbread, and for the burnt offerings morning and evening, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts of the LORD our God. This is an ordinance forever to Israel.

2 Chron 8:13 – Even after a certain rate every day, offering according to the commandment of Moses, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts, three times in the year, even in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles.

2 Chron 31:3 – He appointed also the king's portion of his substance for the burnt offerings, to wit, for the morning and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, as it is written in the law of the LORD.

Nehemiah 10:33 – For the shewbread, and for the continual meat offering, and for the continual burnt offering, of the sabbaths, of the new moons, for the set feasts, and for the holy things, and for the sin offerings to make an atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God.

Ezek 45:17 – And it shall be the prince's part to give burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and drink offerings, in the feasts, and in the new moons, and in the sabbaths, in all solemnities of the house of Israel: he shall prepare the sin offering, and the meat offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, to make reconciliation for the house of Israel.

Hosea 2:11 – I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.

Gal 4:10 – Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.

Col 2:16 – Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days

My interpretation is as follows:

festivals = yearly feasts

new moons = monthly new moon feast mentioned in Ezekiel and other texts

sabbaths = weekly 7th day sabbaths

Note that ALL are in the plural – so it is not unexpected to find the sabbath being plural too. In fact, the plural Greek word used, “*sabbaton*” is a plural used in other texts like Matt 28:1, Luke 4:16, and in the Septuagint, the version of the Old Testament from which the Apostles quoted, Exodus 20:8 and Leviticus 23:37-38. So this plural word “*sabbaton*” can and does mean the 7th day of the week.

Also, the lack of a definite article in the original Greek also does not prevent the word “*sabbaton*” from being translated as the 7th day sabbath. Matt 28:1, John 5:9, 5:10 and 5:16 all use the same term without the definite article, and all of them *do* mean the 7th day sabbath.

In the original Greek, the word used by Matthew in Matt 28:1 is the SAME plural Greek word *sabbaton* used by Paul in Col 2:16.

In the original Greek, the word used by Luke in Matt 4:16 is the SAME plural Greek word *sabbaton* used by Paul in Col 2:16.

Therefore, *sabbaton* in Col 2:16 is to be seen in the same light as *sabbaton* in Matt 28:1 and Luke 4:16 – as the weekly sabbath.

See also the Septuagint, Exodus 20:8 and Leviticus 23:37-38.

I would like to know from Adventists how they interpret each of those three types of day mentioned in Col 2:16 – if the word “*sabbath*” means annual feasts, what does the word “*festival*” mean? And what are their reasons for doing so? And why is my reasoning wrong?

If it refers to the annual sabbaths, Paul is really making silly mistakes here – he would in fact be saying, “*with regard to an annual sabbath, a monthly feast, or an annual sabbath.*” To repeat himself like that makes no sense.

Paul uses the term “*festival*” and the term “*sabbath*” in one phrase, so they obviously mean something different in that phrase – they cannot be synonyms if they are used in this way in one phrase. Paul lists three different types of feast here – it would be absurd to claim he is talking about two types, and just mentioned once twice.

Obviously, the word “*festival*” means something different to “*sabbath*” here – “*festival*” means “*annual feasts*” and “*sabbath*” means the 7th day. Paul’s writing skills were not that poor.

Therefore we have to accept that the sabbath is merely a shadow of Christ. Now that we have the real thing in our lives, the sabbath is no longer obligatory for us as Christians.

Based on BOTH grammar and language meaning on the one hand, AND parallel biblical examples on the other, we see that the only logical interpretation of this text is to accept that the weekly sabbath is indeed listed as one of the precepts of the Old Covenant now nailed to the cross.

So far, all I can see is that Paul DID mean to refer to the 7th day sabbath, so we should accept that

instead of fighting it. Often, I know, that is hard, because we are brought up in a certain way, and it's human nature to resist change. But take a careful look at the New Testament, and if you really can find references to the sabbath being necessary, to the sabbath being kept by Christians, I'd love to hear them – I cannot find any.

Col 2:16 says that the 7th day sabbath is a shadow of something to come. Elsewhere the Bible says it is a memorial of something past. So we seem to agree, the 7th day sabbath is BOTH a shadow of Christ (already come) and a memorial of the old creation (which turned to sin.) The logical Christian choice is to keep the day that looks forward to the NEXT coming of Christ, and looks back on the NEW creation WITHOUT sin – Sunday.

Chapter 16: Col 2:16 – a weekly sabbath reference or not? Part 1

Colossians 2:16-17 (KJV) states:

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

In this post, I'm going to add further information and deal with a specific argument I haven't discussed here before.

While many recent Adventist scholars, including Samuele Bacchiocchi, acknowledge the fact that this passage refers to the weekly sabbath, there is another argument from other Adventists that claim it does not.

The Adventist argument:

1. The verse lists three types of celebrations. The first, holy days, refers solely to Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. The last, sabbath days, refers to Trumpets and the Day of Atonement.
2. This is seen by the Greek word Paul uses – *heorte* (εορτη, G1859 in Strong's Concordance) for holy days, and *sabbaton* (σαββατον, G4521 in Strong's Concordance) for sabbath days. *Heorte* is never used elsewhere in the New Testament, or anywhere in the Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament the Apostles quoted from) to refer to either Trumpets or the Day of Atonement. It only ever refers to Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.
3. This therefore limits Paul's use of *heorte* to Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.
4. Therefore, if the others (Trumpets and the Day of Atonement) are to be included in Col 2:16, then "*sabbath days*" must refer to them, and not to the weekly sabbath.

It's a convenient argument, and helps do away with the otherwise problematic repetition that would be required if Paul were actually saying "*annual holy days, new moons, and annual holy days*".

But it's not without its flaws. While it is true *heorte* is never used to refer to Trumpets and the Day of Atonement when they are written of individually, it is not true that collectively *heorte* never includes them, something that seems to be omitted from their arguments, and brushed aside when brought up in discussions.

One of the better online defences of this argument lists "all" the uses of the word *heorte* in the Septuagint, but they leave out the inconvenient ones.

The key chapter we'll look at is Leviticus 23. The Adventist list above of "all" uses of *heorte* lists verses 6 and 34. Why does this Adventist list omit the damning evidence in verses 2, 4, 37, and 44 where *heorte* includes what they don't want it to include?

A brief background to the Septuagint (LXX) – this is the Greek Old Testament translated into Greek between 300 BC and 132 BC. It was the translation most used in the New Testament when the Old Testament was cited, and the Apostles were therefore very familiar with it.

***Heorte* in Leviticus 23 – all-inclusive term**

Leviticus 23 lists the feasts [*heorte*] of the Lord. It begins with an instruction to Moses to tell Israel about these feasts. It is then proclaimed that “*These are the feasts of the LORD*” (v4).

Lev 23:2 contains the instruction to Moses to proclaim the feasts [*heorte*, used twice]

LXX: λαλησον τοις υιοις ισραηλ και ερεις προς αυτους αι εορται κυριου ας καλεσετε αυτας κλητας αγιας αυται εισιν εορται μου

KJV: Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts.

The weekly sabbath is then included in this category in verse 3.

KJV: Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings.

Lev 23:4 introduces them with the word *heorte*, and the whole chapter encapsulates them between two sets of *heorte*.

LXX: αυται αι εορται τω κυριω κληται αγιαι ας καλεσετε αυτας εν τοις καιροις αυτων

KJV: These are the feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons.

They are then followed sequentially through the year:

Passover/Unleavened Bread – v5-14

Pentecost – v15-22

Trumpets – v23-25

Day of Atonement – v26-32

Tabernacles – v33-36

Lev 23:37 appears to close off the list, using *heorte* again

LXX: αυται αι εορται κυριω ας καλεσετε κλητας αγιας ωστε προσενεγκαι καρπωματα τω κυριω ολοκαυτωματα και θυσιας αυτων και σπονδας αυτων το καθ ημεραν εις ημεραν

KJV: These are the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD, a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, every thing upon his day

Shemini Atzeret, or the 8th day, is then added – v39-43 (and includes a repeat of the instructions for Tabernacles)

Lev 23:44 finally closes with “*And Moses declared unto the children of Israel the feasts [heorte] of the LORD.*”

LXX: και ελαλησεν μωυσης τας εορτας κυριου τοις υιοις ισραηλ

From this, starting with the *heorte* in v2 and in v4, and ending with *heorte* in v37 and v44, we find a clear list that includes all 5 of the feasts (6 if you include the 8th Day), and thus *heorte* covers Trumpets and Atonement as well.

The exact same usage of *heorte* can be seen in Numbers 28-29, with Num 28:2 starting off with *heorte*, then coming a list of daily/weekly/monthly/annual sacrifices for each feast, including Trumpets and Atonement, and then closing off in Num 29:39 with another *heorte*. (Note that these references are also missing from the Adventist list I mentioned above that cites the usage of *heorte* in the Septuagint.)

Conclusion

The term “*sabbath*” was used in the five books of Moses at times to refer to some of these annual days, but as time progressed, the word became limited to the weekly sabbath. Obviously it was used in translations of the older texts, but we can reasonably expect Paul’s use of it (such as in Col 2:16) to match contemporary use – as a reference to the weekly sabbath.

While *heorte* was not typically used to refer to certain individual feasts, it was certainly used in Greek nearly contemporary with Paul to refer to the entire set. Given this, it is most reasonable to interpret *heorte* in Col 2:16 in this way, as referring to the whole set of annual feasts, with σαββατων (*sabbaton*) meaning the weekly sabbath.

Col 2:16 is therefore best interpreted as:

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an [annual] holyday, or of the new moon, or of the [weekly] sabbath days

... thus following a time-line of annual, monthly, weekly.

Part 2 continues this topic ...

Chapter 17: Col 2:16 – a weekly sabbath reference or not? Part 2

In part 1, we saw that the Greek word used by Paul for the holy days in Col 2:16 (εορτη, *heorte*) was used in the Greek Old Testament, with which he was well acquainted, in a way that included all five (or six) annual feasts decreed by God. Given that it was unlikely that he would use the word “sabbath” in his writings to mean something it didn’t mean in contemporary use, and given that it was entirely plausible, given biblical evidence, that he used the term “*heorte*” to cover all of the annual feasts, Col 2:16 is best interpreted as a sequence of festivals listed by frequency – annual, then monthly, then weekly.

Now we’ll look at several other similar frequency-based sequences in the Bible, and take a look at whether Col 2:17 allows the weekly sabbath to be included as something that was a shadow of what we have now.

Several times in the Old Testament, and twice in the New Testament, we see Israel’s holy days listed in various time-based sequences, usually from frequent to infrequent (daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, multi-annual). Not every list covers all 5 frequencies, but you see that they are listed in a logical order.

Sacrifices in Numbers

This sequence is derived from the original lists in the books of Moses, and especially Numbers 28-29, where the sacrifices are explained.

- Daily sacrifices – Numbers 28:3-8
- Weekly sabbath sacrifices – v9-10
- New moon sacrifices – v11-15
- Passover and Unleavened Bread sacrifices – v16-25
- Pentecost – v26-30
- Trumpets – Numbers 29:1-6
- Day of Atonement – v6-11
- Tabernacles – v12-34
- Shemini Atzeret – v35-38

Note again (see Part 1 for details) that the Greek word *heorte* (εορτη) is used in the Septuagint to encapsulate all these days.

Time-based sequences

Other passages where we see this time-based sequence are:

1 Chron 23:31 – [And to offer all burnt sacrifices unto the LORD in the sabbaths, in the new moons, and on the set feasts, by number, according to the order commanded unto them,](#)

continually before the LORD

2 Chron 2:4 – Behold, I build an house to the name of the LORD my God, to dedicate it to him, and to burn before him sweet incense, and for the continual shewbread, and for the burnt offerings morning and evening, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts of the LORD our God. This is an ordinance for ever to Israel.

2 Chron 8:13 – Even after a certain rate every day, offering according to the commandment of Moses, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts, three times in the year, even in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles.

Here we have something slightly different – three of the feasts (Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles) are named, and two (Trumpets and Atonement) are omitted. Here Adventists like to claim that the sabbaths are Trumpets and Atonement, and the solemn feasts are Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. But notice the difference – the previous verse (2 Chr 8:12) lists these as being sacrifices personally offered by Solomon during a certain time, and this has no impact on the meaning of the word *heorte*, as this is shown sufficiently elsewhere to include all the annual holy days (discussed above and in part 1).

2 Chron 31:3 – He appointed also the king’s portion of his substance for the burnt offerings, to wit, for the morning and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, as it is written in the law of the LORD.

Ezek 45:17 – And it shall be the prince’s part to give burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and drink offerings, in the feasts, and in the new moons, and in the sabbaths, in all solemnities of the house of Israel: he shall prepare the sin offering, and the meat offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, to make reconciliation for the house of Israel.

Here we see them listed in frequency of infrequent to frequent, and then summed up as “*all solemnities*”.

Hosea 2:11 – I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.

This is an interesting verse. Four events are listed, and not in order of frequency. There are several ways to read this:

1. her annual feast days (Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles), her monthly feast days (new moon), her weekly sabbath, and her solemn feasts (Trumpets and Atonement).
2. her feasts – i.e. monthly new moons, weekly sabbath, annual holy days.
3. her annual feast days (all of them, *heorte*), her monthly new moons, her weekly sabbaths, and everything else.

Adventists who insist (contrary to the evidence) that *heorte* never includes Trumpets and Atonement would choose the first one. (And, interestingly, some Adventists who cite the list cite it as annual “*feast days*”, followed by the “*new moons*”, followed by the other “*solemn feasts*” – omitting the weekly sabbath.)

Only the third has maintained the usual frequency-based list – annual, monthly, weekly. That itself indicates that the third is the most likely, as all others list them in either ascending or descending order of frequency.

It doesn’t really matter either way – it’s not conclusive evidence for the Adventist position, and, in fact, does their position a lot of harm – there is no way at all to avoid the inclusion of the weekly sabbath in this list – and this verse has been seen by Christians throughout the history of Christianity as prophesying the abolition of all of these days.

Lastly, Gal 4:10 lists the following:

Gal 4:10 – *Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.*

We again see a frequency-based list, indicating specific days (the only days, outside of the sacrifice timetable that included daily sacrifices, not covered already, were the weekly sabbaths), months (new moons), times (times of the year), and years (most likely the multi-annual cycles incorporated into Israel’s calendar).

The weekly sabbath as a shadow

Lastly, we should briefly look at whether or not the sabbath was a shadow of something greater.

Sabbath:

1. Memorial of the original creation. Sin marred this creation.
2. Memorial of the exodus from Egypt. This freed Israel from slavery to the Egyptians.
3. Finding physical rest from work.

What the sabbath was a shadow of:

1. The new creation in Christ after being brought to life in his resurrection (2 Cor 5:17, Eph 4:24, Col 3:9)
2. The freedom from slavery to sin, brought by Jesus (Rom 6:18, Gal 5:1)
3. Rest in Christ from our spiritual labours (Matt 11:28, Heb 4)

Matt 11:28 – *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

Ironically for Adventists, immediately after Jesus saying what he did in Matt 11:28, Matthew records Jesus and the disciples go on to pick corn on the sabbath, and Jesus has to tell the Pharisees that he is superior to the sabbath, and then goes on to rub it in by healing someone on the same day.

Col 2:16-17, in summary, lists Old Testament holy days in order of frequency, using contemporary

Greek to refer to all annual feasts collectively (*heorte*), the new moon celebration, and the weekly sabbath (*sabbaton*).

Chapter 18: Rom 14:5-6 – do we need to keep the sabbath?

Romans 14:1-6 – Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

Romans 14 lists two examples of spiritual weakness – avoiding meats was a special way of obeying God, obtaining righteousness in his sight, and so was the keeping of certain days. Paul tells us that while it may help spiritually those who wish to participate in these spiritual exercises, they are NOT actual means of obtaining righteousness, and those who observe these means are weaker in their faith, yet they do these things unto the Lord. Those who are more mature and can see past these physical attempts to please God are not obliged to keep certain days or avoid meats. Since Paul was writing the epistle to the Romans to a group of mixed Jewish and Gentile Christians where there was a definite problem with trying to make the Gentiles observe Jewish customs (e.g. circumcision and the sabbath), it would have been highly irresponsible of Paul to say this if he knew that what he was saying was NOT true about the sabbath – that the sabbath had to be kept. Obviously, in the absence of any specific command about the sabbath, we must include the weekly sabbath in with the days that do not need to be observed by the stronger members of the Church.

The important phrase is “*Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.*” If Christians were expected to observe the sabbath, Paul would be encouraging them to keep the sabbath, trying to convince them of a certain point of view, not giving them freedom to do what they feel is right. He would not say that both those who ate meat and those who did not eat meat both gave thanks to God, right alongside saying those who keep the day honour God by doing so, and those who don't also honour God by not doing so, if the sabbath were indeed as important as Adventists claim it is.

Chapter 19: Gal 4:10-11 – do we need to keep the sabbath?

Gal 4:8-11 – Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.

Paul was writing to Gentile Christians who had converted from paganism and adopted a strict Jewish way of life – going from one pointless extreme to another. They were keeping Jewish law strictly, so the days they kept were not pagan holy days. If we read the preceding chapters of Galatians, we will see that Paul is talking here of the same ritualistic trappings, only this time in Judaism. He mentions circumcision in chapter 2 and he mentions the observance of days in chapter 4. The Gentiles had fallen for the heresy preached by the pro-circumcision party, which included the observance of the Old Covenant holy days – see Gal 2. They had previously been slaves to a similar mentality under their pagan beliefs – obsession with ritualistic observance of days. Paul comments on this in verse 8, and then comments on their newly acquired bondage to elements of Judaism such as he mentions in verse 10 – days, months, seasons, years.

The principle he shows is that the keeping of days is meaningless – and since the sabbath is a day, it makes sense to include it here. Without any remark to the contrary to show otherwise, it is not sound reasoning when Adventists assume that their special day is excluded from Paul's teaching.

Also, the phrase days/months/seasons/years follows the biblical example, and is a type of phrase used for the holy days of the Old Covenant.

Chapter 20: Hebrews 4 – what is the Christian sabbath?

Heb 4:1-11 – Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, Today, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Joshua had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

Hebrews goes through a list of Old Covenant signs and compares them to the New Covenant reality. If Hebrews is to be consistent in its treatment of these Old Covenant signs, the sabbath must be treated the same was as circumcision, lamb sacrifices, and priests.

Adventists claim that the sabbath is different in this case, that it continues for Christians today, based on Heb 4:9.

Only by obliterating context can that assertion be made. Go back and read this section quoted above. Then go and read the entire book of Hebrews, without selective quoting, and see if you come up with the idea that the sabbath is the single exception to the Old Covenant symbols that are abolished, in spite of the fact that the book treats it in exactly the same way as those that are abolished. It compares the Old Covenant lamb sacrifice with Jesus' death ... the former no longer applicable to Christians. It compares the Levitical priesthood with the priesthood of Christ ... the former being no longer relevant to Christians. It compares the sabbath to our rest in Christ ... and, with no evidence whatsoever, Adventists claim that this is the single exception within this book, when the book itself treats it exactly the same as the rest? Sorry, but people who take the Bible for what it says, and not what they want it to say, won't fall for that.

This text is proof once again that destroys the Sabbatarian point of view. In verse 4, Paul (the author was probably/possibly Paul, and many believe him to be Paul, so we will call him Paul) treats the sabbath with such nonchalance it is highly doubtful that he had any respect for it any longer – he says in a blasé fashion, “*somewhere*” as if the actual commandment which EVERYONE should have been able to reference in Exodus or Deuteronomy was quite irrelevant. Every observant Jew, anyone who knew the Bible at all, would know exactly where the sabbath was given, where the 10 Commandments were! Why is Paul implying here that this is NOT important? Such a casual remark about the sabbath hardly fits in with the rest of the claims Adventists are making about Heb 4:1-11.

Paul goes on to state that God set aside ANOTHER DAY – “TODAY”. That is what it says in the literal Greek. If we read the actual words of Heb 4:1-11, it becomes clear that the sabbath was for the Jews – quantity time, one seventh – but TODAY – all the time, continuously, quality time – is for the Christian.

Heb 4:10 is clearly talking of ETERNAL rest which we find with Christ. Where Hebrews DOES mention a DAY, it is in 4:4 and 4:7 ... these are contrasted as being the sabbath given to Israel, and the “today” given to those who, after Christ’s atonement, accept the Gospel message. We therefore no longer keep the sabbath, we find our rest TODAY – and the text quoted by the author of Hebrews, Psalm 95:7-8, supports our view fully – this is a continuous call to eternal rest, not a weekly reminder of a shadow for which we have already seen the reality.

The sabbath is not a commandment we have to obey. Circumcision is also not a commandment we have to obey. Sacrificing lambs is also not a commandment we have to obey. God gave all these commandments, but the New Testament shows us (Acts 15, Gal 5:2, Col 2:14-17, Hebrews) that these things – sabbath, circumcision, lamb sacrifice, etc., are all fulfilled in Christ. They have been made FULL in Christ, so we no longer perform empty lamb sacrifices, we no longer perform useless acts of circumcision, we no longer keep worthless sabbaths. Christ is our Lamb, Christ is our sabbath, and we are baptised into Christ instead circumcised.

The sabbath, like the lamb sacrifices and the Levitical priesthood, is abolished ... and that is exactly what the entire book of Hebrews is about. ALL these things are abolished and replaced with something better ... the lamb with the eucharist, the Levitical priesthood with Christ’s mediatorship, and the sabbath with a more perfect rest – eternal rest. So, to Christians the sabbath has as much relevance as the Levites and lamb killing do.

Hebrews **abolishes** the sabbath! It tells us that while God gave **our ancestors** the 7th day, he gives us another day – TODAY.

One reply I got to this from an Adventist reads as follows:

Jesus did not, but “if” he did, “then would he not afterward have spoken of another day?” If He did, where? Why wasn’t Paul aware of it?

Paul is NOT saying, “then would he not have spoken of another day?” ... the Adventist has adding a question mark to what the Bible has as a statement. Go back and look in the Bible ... it is NOT a question. Then go and look in modern English Bibles, and any other language you understand ... it is not a question there. Hebrews is saying that if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day ... this shows that since Joshua did NOT give them true and final rest, God DID indeed speak of another day. Don’t let Adventists change the meaning of the Bible ... accept it as it is.

Chapter 21: 1 Cor 16:2 – regular first day services?

1 Cor 16:1-6 – Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me. Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia. And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go.

1 Cor 16:2 is quite good evidence for regular Sunday observance. It shows that every week – regularly, weekly – on a certain day, the people collected money for mission work done by Paul. This day was the first day of the week. The passage does not directly state that there are worship services on the first day of the week, but one can deduce from the context that this had to be so. The money was brought together weekly to one place – when else but the weekly day of worship? What better day to collect such donations than the day on which the Christians came together as a group? If they kept the sabbath, then this would have been the sabbath. But it was Sunday Paul chose, which indicates that Sunday was an easier day to collect things into one place than the sabbath was.

Sabbatarians often claim that the money was to be collected at home on a weekly basis. This has two major flaws – first, the society they lived in did not work on a system where they got paid according to a 7-day weekly cycle and then did their budgeting on Sundays. Budgeting would need to be done when the cash came in, not only Sundays, and it was not the case that they all got paid on Friday or Saturday or Sunday on a cycle of 7 days. If they were not gathering together on the first day of the week, Paul's request makes no sense, because then they would have been advised to put aside their money once they were paid, or, if they did gather together on the sabbath, on the Friday, so it could be collected on the following day when they got together. There is no apparent financial advantage to putting money aside on Sunday over putting it aside on payday ... actually the latter is even more sensible.

The second flaw is that if everyone collected their donations at home and stored it under the bed, Paul would still have to get everyone to bring it in when he arrived. He is clearly hoping to arrive on a random, unpredictable day and collect money which has been pooled and stored in one place for the entire community. He states that he does not want to have special gatherings/collections when he comes – he wants it pre-arranged.

Adventists often claim that the reason the Christians were to collect the money on Sunday was because it was contrary to God's law to collect money on the sabbath. But in the Bible there are **no** prohibitions for *Christians* to collect money on the sabbath, so it seemed pretty pointless to collect the money the day AFTER they got together for their weekly worship service, if their weekly worship service was indeed on the sabbath. The Adventist position doesn't make sense.

Can you seriously imagine, after reading the theology of mercy preached by Jesus, where one can happily pull a sheep out of a pit on the sabbath, never mind help someone in need, and after reading Paul's examination of the law, that Christians actually were as legalistic as the Pharisees in this regard? Do you really buy the story that Christians, who on the one hand believed Paul when he said the sabbath was a mere shadow and nailed to the cross, also taught that money to be used to spread the Gospel could NOT be collected on the sabbath? What was more important – the sabbath or the Gospel? Can you seriously imagine that the same Jesus would forbid the funding of the Gospel on a day that he said was made for man, not man for that day? What is more important to God – the sabbath or the Gospel teaching about the salvation of the world? I think the answer should be obvious. The Adventist position goes against the points Jesus made with the Pharisees, and places the sabbath at a higher level of importance than the Gospel message. That, taken with a complete lack of historical evidence for their claim, means that the Sabbatarian claim can safely be rejected.

Chapter 22: 1 Cor 16:2 – Adventists take up monetary offerings on the sabbath?

Someone recently brought it to my attention that in Adventist services on the sabbath today, offerings are taken up – money is collected.

While I do not see anything wrong with that, I find it odd, as a frequently used argument by Adventists is that the offerings on the first day of the week mentioned in 1 Cor 16:2 were put aside on the first day because collecting them on the sabbath would have been breaking the sabbath.

Surely that cannot be the case? In previous chapter, I point out the following:

Can you seriously imagine, after reading the theology of mercy preached by Jesus, where one can happily pull a sheep out of a pit on the sabbath, never mind help someone in need, and after reading Paul's examination of the law, that Christians actually were as legalistic as the Pharisees in this regard? ... What was more important – the sabbath or the Gospel? Can you seriously imagine that the same Jesus would forbid the funding of the Gospel on a day that he said was made for man, not man for that day? What is more important to God – the sabbath or the Gospel teaching about the salvation of the world?

Are Adventists today breaking the sabbath by taking up such collections? Or is it just a bad argument?

Chapter 23: Further analysis of 1 Corinthians 16 verses 1-2

Over at Answering Catholicism, a now defunct website set up by a Oneness Pentecostal with sabbatarian leanings with the aim of arguing with me, Erol is making some interesting claims about the Catholic Church. Apart from subscribing to the long discredited Vicarius Filii Dei = papal title myth, he has a number of less unreasonable articles about Catholicism, to which he objects.

Erol's first contact with me was in 2006, when he called me a "**LIARRRRRR!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**" Back then he wasn't interested in discussion, just name calling.

My latest discussion with Erol was on his website, where he takes issue with what I say on my website about the passages in Acts 20:7 and 1 Cor 16:1-2.

I'll go through a few points, the most important being Erol's claim that Paul instructed the Christians at Corinth to stay at home with their offerings, and that he planned to collect them from the individual homes when he was passing through town.

As a reminder, the two passages in question in the KJV are:

Acts 20:6-11 – And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days. And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.

1 Cor 16:1-6 – Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me. Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia. And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go.

Regarding Acts 20:7, Erol states that

Paul travelled on the 1st day, he therefore did not keep the 1st day holy.

Erol makes an assumption here regarding the rules by which Paul would have kept the 1st day of the week holy. He assumes that Paul would not have travelled on this day, and therefore concludes that this day was not kept holy by Paul because Paul travelled on that day. However, there is no rational basis for that assumption, either in the Bible, or in the evidence we have of how first and second century Christians kept Sunday. One could just as easily conclude that many modern Catholic bishops and priests do not observe Sunday because they travel on that day.

Erol also makes the inaccurate claim that the Catholic Church changed the sabbath to Sunday. Firstly, the sabbath was never changed, it remains Saturday. Secondly, the Catholic Church teaches that the Apostles began the practice of Sunday observance.

Erol states:

Rome did change the Sabbath and she claims that act proudly by saying its her MARK, furthermore she claims she needs no authority for she herself assumes authority over the Bible to make up whatever bat crazy idea's come to her mind.

He doesn't back that up with any official Catholic statement on the matter; as I've mentioned before on this blog and elsewhere in this book, sabbath keepers tend to provide inaccurate quotes or quotes from unofficial sources such as newspapers.

Erol also claims that Paul instructed the Christians to keep their offering at home. This seems plausible at first glance, if one considers the words “*lay by him*” and “*in store*”. Erol seems to rely heavily on his understanding of these words. They are the best argument he has for his position. However, based on context, I believe they do not require a home-kept offering. There are also several questions and problems that a home-kept offering would raise, and Erol doesn't want to address these.

The first is the issue of the day on which the offering is to be set aside – the 1st day of the week. Why the first day? Adventists and other sabbath keepers have put forward the theory that the first day of the week was the day on which people got paid, and so that would be the logical day for any offering based on their payment. Unfortunately, that doesn't hold up under scrutiny – the world at that time didn't subscribe to the policy envisaged by the sabbath keepers proposing it. Romans, for instance, had an 8-day business week. Corinth was in Greece, and they didn't have a 1st-day-of-7 payment system either.

The only answer that fits the historical evidence for what went on on the 1st day of the week is the one where the Christians gathered together on that day because that was their normal custom. Barnabas highlights this in his epistle in the first century; Ignatius, the disciple of the Apostle John, points this out in the early second century AD.

The second problem is how Paul would go about collecting the offerings. He explicitly states that he does not want collections when he comes. It seems as if he wants the collections completed by the time he gets there. In his words, as translated in the KJV: “*that there be no gatherings when I come*”. “*Gatherings*” means monetary collections in the Greek, not groups of people gathering

together.

Erol insists that Paul would collect the offerings as he passed through town, but this seems to contradict what Paul had said about there being no collections when he got there.

There seem to be two important aspects of the instruction in verse 2 that we can use to analyse the various scenarios possible:

1. That the collections be done on the 1st day of the week
2. That no offerings be collected when Paul arrives

Here are a few of the scenarios that are possible:

Scenario 1:

People put aside offerings in their home ... Paul collects when he passes through Corinth, visiting each household ... Paul then meets with the leaders of the Christian community, and hands the offerings to someone to take to Jerusalem

Problems: the offerings can be put aside on any day of the week, making the instruction to do so on the 1st day meaningless. The scenario also results in Paul having to visit each Christian household in Corinth, and then visit the leaders of the community. This would be impractical – Paul wants things done fast when he gets there, and this would just slow things down. It would be more practical to give the offerings to the leadership prior to Paul's arrival, so that the offerings were already ready and waiting in one place. The scenario also makes meaningless Paul's request that the offerings not be made when he comes, but rather in advance – this scenario has Paul doing the collecting he doesn't want to do when he gets there – “*that there be no gatherings [collections] when I come*”.

Scenario 2:

People put aside offerings in their home on the first day of the week ... they hand them in later to their leadership ... Paul meets with the leaders when he gets there, and gives the offering to someone to take to Jerusalem.

Problems: this leaves open the question as to why it should be done on the first day of the week. There was no financial reason to do it on that day. Was there a religious one? Sabbath keepers wouldn't accept that answer. It remains illogical. It also contradicts Erol's requirement that the offerings be kept at home; I don't see that as a real problem, but it makes it unacceptable to him.

Scenario 3:

People put aside offerings and hand them to the leaders when Paul specified – the 1st day of the week ... Paul meets with the leaders when he gets there, and gives the offering to someone to take to Jerusalem.

Problems: This meets the criteria a) of the collection being on the first day of the week without the

timing being illogical, and b) of collections not being held when Paul comes. It does, however, leave a problem for those who want to have “*lay by him in store*” mean that the donation would be kept at home.

Is that a problem? Yes, a real one. Many commentators take that view, even great Catholic scholars such as St John Chrysostom.

How to resolve the problem: the three aspects of the instruction must make sense together. Sunday, “*lay by him in store*”, and no collections when Paul gets there.

That this be done on Sunday is clear, and there must be a reason for this being part of the instruction. I’ve found no alternative explanation apart from the claim that this had to do with when people got paid; that claim doesn’t appear to hold any water, as secular society back then didn’t run its finances by the Christian or Jewish calendar. The only logical reasons for a specific timing by the Christian calendar would be for it to coincide with a Christian meeting, or with financial practicalities. For the latter, I find no evidence.

That there be no collections held when Paul gets there is hard to get around, though several have tried. I’ve found those that suggest Paul would hold his own collection passing each home, but that defeats the purpose of his instruction. There are some that say that putting something aside at home each week would allow for a weekly commitment – i.e. planning – instead of a single collection at the end when Paul comes, followed by gathering it together when he gets there (either by Paul collecting it himself, or by calling the people to bring it to where Paul is.) That would allow for “*that there be no gatherings when I come*” to apply only to individual contributions, but not to the final collection of what has already been designated as a donation. I don’t think there is enough in the text to consider that to be a safe interpretation – that the instruction was meant to have such an exception. And in no way does it solve the problem of why the individuals should do this on the first day of the week.

So, can “*lay by him in store*” be reasonably interpreted to allow for a weekly collection of the donations into one place to be kept safe by the Christian leaders? And if such an interpretation is reasonable, it is at least equal to Erol’s interpretation, because he is not the one true interpreter of the Bible, and he doesn’t have the authority to say that his interpretations are not mere interpretations, but what the Bible actually says. He’d either have to prove that, or show why my interpretation is not possible, or not reasonable, if he hopes to win any argument.

I believe there is a reasonable interpretation that allows such a scenario. I believe there is a way to read those words that allows harmony between the two apparently contradicting statements – “*lay by him in store*” and “*no gatherings when I come*”.

The People’s New Testament commentary has the following to say:

The usual view is that every one was directed to set aside something on the Lord’s day and keep it until Paul came. This view is sanctioned by the translations and most of the commentators. Macknight renders: “On the first day of the week, let each one of you

lay somewhat by itself, putting it into the treasury.” I believe Macknight is right; for (1) there were to be no collections when Paul came. That implies that the money was to be placed in the treasury. Otherwise, it would have to be collected. (2) Thesaurizoon, rendered in the Common Version “in store,” is a present participle, meaning literally, “putting into the thesaurus,” or “treasury.” (3) All church history testifies that the early church took up weekly collections on the first day of the week. See Pliny’s Letter to the Emperor Trajan. (4) We know, from Acts 21:7, and from all early church history, that the church met on the first day of the week. It only remains to add that par’ heauto, rendered by the translators “by him,” is rendered with equal correctness, “by itself.” Its form is that of the neuter reflexive pronoun.

I find no source for the Macknight reference, but the argument holds.

Point 4 in the commentary above – Acts 21:7 should be Acts 20:7, and I agree with those who say that this is not an absolute proof that meetings on the first day were regular ones. It does, however, add to the body of evidence that it was the norm.

Point 3 in the commentary above – Pliny’s letter, as far as I can find, doesn’t deal with collections of money. An additional reference to Justin Martyr, 150 AD:

And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president ...

– First Apology 68, Weekly worship of the Christians

The word “in store” can mean a central treasury in the Bible. In the Greek Old Testament (the one quoted from by the Apostles), the same word is used in the following passages, where it indicates a central treasury:

Joshua 6:19 – But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD.

1 Kings 7:51 – So was ended all the work that king Solomon made for the house of the LORD. And Solomon brought in the things which David his father had dedicated; even the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, did he put among the treasures of the house of the LORD.

Nehemiah 7:70-1 – And some of the chief of the fathers gave unto the work. The Tirshatha gave to the treasure a thousand drams of gold, fifty basons, five hundred and thirty priests’ garments. And some of the chief of the fathers gave to the treasure of the work twenty thousand drams of gold, and two thousand and two hundred pound of silver.

Malachi 3:10 – Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

The words “*lay by him*”, as we have seen above, can be translated “*lay by itself*”. That is then completely compatible with placing the donation in a central treasury. However, it remains a bit odd that the offering would be placed “*by itself*” – I’ll leave that one open for thought, as it isn’t really necessary. The “*by him*” can be interpreted to mean, not merely the location, but the disposition of the person. Thus the “*by him*” and the “*in store*” need not be the same place. “*By him*” may refer to the way it is done (whether at home or anywhere else), while the “*in store*” may refer to the central location from which Paul would send it to Jerusalem.

Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible clarifies this:

Let him lay up at home, treasuring up as he has been prospered. The Greek phrase, “by himself”, means, probably, the same as at home. Let him set it apart; let him designate a certain portion; let him do this by himself, when he is at home, when he can calmly look at the evidence of his prosperity. Let him do it not under the influence of pathetic appeals, or for the sake of display when he is with others; but let him do it as a matter of principle, and when he is by himself. The phrase in Greek, “treasuring up”, may mean that each one was to put the part which he had designated into the common treasury. This interpretation seems to be demanded by the latter part of the verse. They were to lay it by, and to put it into the common treasury, that there might be no trouble of collecting when he should come. Or it may, perhaps, mean that they were individually to treasure it up, having designated in their own mind the sum which they could give, and have it in readiness when he should come.

The first part of his explanation makes the most sense. The last sentence, giving another interpretation, has the same problems as previously discussed in this post – the question as to why it had to be Sunday, and the problem with a collection of all the donations being required when Paul arrived, contrary to his instructions, and impractical if there was a functioning leadership in Corinth.

Here are a few of the more interesting quotes from Erol:

I wrote:

Sabbatarians often claim that the money was to be collected at home on a weekly basis.

Erol replied:

We do not claim, scripture does! Like I showed in the post, the Greek shows the true meaning of the place where they gathered, at home!

He makes no distinction between the Bible and his interpretation of it.

Erol wrote:

Since Rome claims Sunday is now the Sabbath they have to do away with such verses because they expose their lies too easily.

That is the real reason Stephen assumes and claims but shows no scriptural evidence for his claims.

I've shown that Rome claims no such thing. The comment I made to that effect never appeared on his blog. And I'm really interested to know how he concludes that I show no scriptural evidence for my claims, when he has been shown where I discuss Acts 20:7 and 1 Cor 16:1-2.

Erol wrote:

In reply to 1 chorintians 16:1-2 he said and i quote.

I wasn't replying to "1 chorintians", or even 1 Corinthians. I was explaining my understanding of it.

I say in Chapter 21:

1 Cor 16:2 is quite good evidence for regular Sunday observance. It shows that every week – regularly, weekly – on a certain day, the people collected money for mission work done by Paul.

Erol responded:

If Stephen had read the context he would have noticed that this is not the case at all in this passage. The context shows that this was an emergency event (famine) and that because of that Paul had to give them ORDERS to do this. "... as I have given orders to the churches of galatia..." (16:1). It was not their regular practise.

The passage itself does not state that Sunday observance was a regular practice, I agree. However, it does indicate that the instructions given cover a number of Sundays. It's highly unlikely that Paul wrote the letter the week before he arrived. If there were a number of weeks between the letter and its arrival, the instructions would mean that each Sunday this should happen. Just as when I pay my rent on the last day of the month, or submit my lab's monthly report by the 7th of the month, I do these things every month, so when they take up a collection on the 1st day of the week, they probably did this every week until Paul came. This is supported by the word "*kata*", which can render "*upon the first day*" as "*every first day*".

"Kata has a distributive force, every first day"
– Vincent's Word Studies.

In Chapter 21 I wrote:

The passage does not directly state that there are worship services on the first day of the week, but one can deduce from the context that this had to be so.

Erol replied:

Again, assumption is not evidence. He assumes that there where worship services even though the context reveals there where not. ea, people being at home, not gathering together in a place etc. Paul even said it himself, “that there be no gatherings when I come”.

It's a deduction, not an assumption. I think Erol has a problem with degrees of interpretation: his interpretations are declared to be “*what the Bible says*”, while any deductions are labelled “*assumptions*”. His assumption that Paul's words “*no gatherings*” shows that people would be at home, “*not gathering together in a place*” is very faulty, since the word for “*gatherings*” is the same as the word for “*collections*” and refers to monetary collections, not human meetings.

Erol wrote:

The context is clear, Paul giving people specific instructions not to gather and to be at home for him to collect the money upon passing through the city.

I called him out on that one, and it was at this point that he started saying the following:

I can keep explaining the verse allowing scripture to define scripture again however you won't understand it, so I won't.

and

And thats the last thing I am gonna say about it to you.

And that's where it ends. Erol deleted my last comment so it couldn't be seen. He has the final word on his blog, and clearly isn't going to deal with the evidence against his claims.

Erol tries to blame my disagreement with him on “tradition” that I am obliged to defend or that has blinded me. Yet the Catholic Church does not have a defined interpretation of this text, and Erol's interpretation (that the donation was kept at home) would not be considered heresy – after all, St John Chrysostom shared his view. (His other conclusions would be, however.) I, in turn, postulate that Erol's opinions are similarly guided by his tradition – he needs to have Paul visiting from house to house in order to maintain his argument against Catholicism, and that is, in my view, what drives his interpretation. Erol claims that his view is what the Bible teaches, as clear as mud for all to see – if they're not Catholics twisting the text to suit their tradition, of course. Erol has fallen into the trap of thinking that how he understands a certain passage IS the correct way, the only way, the inspired way. A common tendency with some Protestants. His interpretation is what the Bible says; everything else is the teachings of men. The key ingredient is that he is not a mere man, but one who has the Holy Spirit guiding him so that he can sit in judgement of all interpretations of the Bible, to declare them to be correct if they agree with him, and to be traditions of men if they don't. His inability to differentiate between the Bible and his interpretation of it is evident throughout his posts. To him, it's a choice between traditions of men and the personal interpretation of Erol.

He also likes to dodge issues by referring to the fact that I am Catholic. He forgets that this is a matter of interpretation, that many Protestants hold the same view as I do on this matter, and that it

really has nothing to do with being Catholic.

Well, surprise – I am claiming that my interpretations are equally inspired and of equal authority as any of his are. Well, my authority IS equal to his, is it not? And I believe what the Bible says too.

Chapter 24: Acts 20:7 – a service on the first day of the week?

Acts 20:6-11 – And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days. And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.

Acts 20:7 refers to a Christian worship service that was held on the first day of the week. According to the text, the service began AFTER the sunset which signaled the start of the first day, defined as the Jews did, so it wasn't even a continuation of a service that began the day before. A look at the grammar of the text in a reliable English translation, and better still, the original Greek, will prove wrong the claims by some Sabbatarian groups that this was a sabbath service that extended into the next day – the text is explicit that the Christians only gathered for the service AFTER the first day had already begun.

But then why is this the only mention of a Christian service on Sunday, apart from 1 Cor 16:2?

Considering that the Old Testament took 2000 years to be written, and the New Testament took 50 years to be written ... considering that the Old Testament is a lot longer than the New Testament ... considering that most of the New Testament was written about the growth of the Church and the spread of the gospel, and the sabbath/Sunday issue was relatively minor and therefore ignored to a large extent ... considering all this, does it surprise you that Sunday is mentioned fewer times than Saturday? It doesn't surprise me at all.

Compare how many times the Apostle Thomas is mentioned after the day of Pentecost, and compare it to the number of times Peter or Paul is mentioned. Does that mean we should say that Thomas immediately retired and went back to whatever he did before? Or does it just mean that the facts surrounding his ministry were not available to be included in the New Testament? One needs to examine the reasons why things in the Bible appear as they are. When you do that with the sabbath, you find NO evidence of sabbath observance by Christians.

Back to Acts 20:7:

After sunset at the end of the seventh day, the 1st day of the week begins. The Bible explicitly tells us that the time they gathered together was the first day of the week, NOT the 7th day of the week. Since it was the first day of the week, it was practically the same as Sunday, since for the early

Christians the first day of the week began the night before, as it did for the Jews. The first day of the week that was kept holy was the end of Saturday at sunset until the end of Sunday at sunset, not midnight to midnight.

Some Bible versions call it Saturday, and Adventists have taken advantage of this, but remember that this Saturday night was still part of the first day of the week. It is only called Saturday night because that is the name that corresponds to that time period today. It is, according to biblical reckoning of time, the first day of the week, and we have to accept that this was a Christian worship service on the first day of the week. The Bible is clear on that.

Some Adventists absurdly even try to argue that this was a service held after the end of the first day of the week.

The original Greek can only be translated one way – and that is that they arrived at this place (where they held the service) on the first day of the week. They did not arrive on Saturday, and preach on into Sunday. They started in Sunday (i.e. after sunset which ended Saturday). Here is why: The text says – *“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them ...”* This is the KJV, and is grammatically correct for both English and Greek. This is a perfect translation of the original Greek, and the Adventist Saturday/Monday interpretation is impossible. It tells us explicitly that the disciples came together to break bread on the first day of the week. It does not tell us that they came together on the 7th day, or that they were already gathered together when the 1st day began. It says that they actually came together on the 1st day of the week, and THEN had their service. Unless you want to throw out the KJV as a reliable translation with good English, you have to accept this.

In Acts 20:7 they were worshipping from a time just after sunset on Saturday (i.e. the start of the first day of the week) until early on Sunday morning. That is the ONLY way the Greek text and the English text can be interpreted. Look closely at the text – it says: *“On the first day of the week, when we gathered together ...”* – this means that they gathered on the first day of the week. Sunday night was already the 2nd day of the week, so they were NOT gathered together on Sunday night. They were gathered together on Saturday night, after sunset, which was therefore on the first day of the week. The Adventist theory that another time system was used and that the first day of the week was Sunday night and not Saturday night falls flat because of two things – 1) they have absolutely no evidence for such a time system, and 2) all Christians throughout Asia used the original Jewish timing for when days began and ended – this is witnessed to by both the New Testament and early Christian texts outside the Bible. It was only much later on in Christian history that midnight was taken as the start/end of a day. Even until the 4th century AD, the days began and ended at sunset.

Anyway, the Bible says it was the first day of the week that they were gathered together for communion and worship. So as a biblical Christian, I hold my worship services in the first day of the week.

Acts 20:7 is the ONLY text in the entire New Testament where the day on which a specific Christian worship service is held is actually named. Other texts might mention the day of the week, but they

don't state that a Christian worship service was held on that day. Yet other texts might mention a Christian worship service, but are not (explicitly) linked to a specific day of the week. Acts 20:7 is the only passage in the Bible that puts the two together in one passage.

Chapter 25: Acts 1 – do Christians keep the sabbath in Acts?

Acts 1:11-12 – Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.

Some Adventists continue the principle of the Pharisees that dictates how far one may walk on the sabbath before one is considered to have “worked”. Apart from places where the term “*sabbath day's journey*” is used, they have no support for this in the Bible.

Numbers 35:4 mentions 1000 cubits, Joshua 3:4 mentions 2000 cubits. It was on these that the Jews based a tradition, still followed by some Adventists, that one may not walk further than 2000 cubits on the sabbath. This equated to a bit under a mile.

What does it actually mean when the early Christians described something as a “*sabbath day's journey*”? Does it really mean they kept the sabbath, and didn't walk very far on that day?

The early Christians grew up in a Jewish culture, and retained many of the same mannerisms and expressions of that culture. Whether or not the Christians kept the sabbath, it is not surprising that they still used the terminology. It is similar to modern society which still refers to one of its commercial holidays as Christmas, though in secular society it often has little to do with Christ. It was a term taken from Catholicism – and Protestantism, which does celebrate the Incarnation of Our Lord, but does not consider the Eucharistic celebration to be a Mass, has kept using the term. Why, then, do we expect people 2000 years ago to be different? They simply used the terminology they were familiar with.

Finally, considering that 40 days after the resurrection of Christ, which the Bible shows was on a Sunday, could not be on a sabbath but rather a Thursday, here we have people walking a sabbath day's journey on a day which was not the sabbath at all – further support for it simply being an expression in the language of their time.

Chapter 26: Acts 13 – do Christians keep the sabbath in Acts?

Acts 13:13-16 – Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem. But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.

Acts 13:26-27 – Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him.

Acts 13:42-44 – And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

Here we start looking at texts that Adventists claim show that early Christians kept the sabbath. They say that these are sabbath services, and since they were attended by Christians, they show that these Christians were keeping the sabbath.

Yes, Acts 13 is referring to a sabbath service, but look where the service is. Is this a Christian service, organised by Christians, for Christian worship? Or is this a Jewish service, organised by Jews, for the usual synagogue service that had been going on in the synagogues for decades prior to Christ's lifetime? It is not in a Christian home or church, and it is not a Christian service. It is a Jewish service. History shows us that these services were not like today's Christian services, where generally Catholics go to Catholic churches, Methodists to Methodist churches, Baptists to Baptist churches, etc. It is a historical fact that Jewish services at the synagogue were not restricted to Jews alone – an entire section of the synagogue was built to accommodate non-Jews. The people at the time welcomed any such gathering where religion and morals and philosophy were discussed. So, naturally, they were attended by Jews and Gentiles alike. And they were attended by Christians who wanted to introduce their own Christian perspective on the matters being discussed, in particular doing things like opening a discussion about prophecies about Christ, and how he fulfilled various Old Testament passages. Coming out of Judaism, obviously many Christians still continued their Jewish traditions until they were expelled from the synagogues.

So, no, by preaching to the Jews and Gentiles in the synagogue on the sabbath is NOT sabbath observance ANY more than Adventists placing tracts on windscreens of cars at Sunday observing

churches is Sunday observance by Adventists. If an Adventist pastor went to a Catholic service to preach to Catholics, would there be any point going on a Saturday? No. If he went on a Sunday, would he be keeping Sunday? No. So you can't claim that Paul was keeping the sabbath, simply because he attended a non-Christian service on that day in order to witness to the non-Christians there.

Where does Acts 13 use the word "*worship*" in relation to the actions of Paul? Nowhere – not one of the words used indicates worship by Paul.

The text of Acts 13 itself demonstrates that Paul is NOT observing the sabbath. The assumption that his presence in the synagogues on the sabbath means his observance of it as a holy day is a mistake Sabbatarians make because they want to find texts where the Apostles keep the sabbath. In fact, there are no such texts in the entire Bible!

Compare gatherings meant for Christian worship to the gathering Paul is attending here – Christian worship services are restricted to Christians only – see Acts 20:7 for one example. What Paul is doing is going to a Jewish non-Christian service in order to witness to the Jews and Gentiles there. The services at the synagogues were not attended only by Jews, and many Gentiles who followed many other religions also went to the synagogue on the sabbath – not because they were keeping the sabbath: they didn't believe in the sabbath principle, it wasn't part of their religion. They went because Saturday was the day of the week when the synagogue was full, and it was on this day that religious and moral and spiritual and philosophical principles were preached and discussed. any person – Jew or Gentile or pagan – would find such an event stimulating, if they were interested in the deeper meaning of life and moral values. And that is the reason many non-Jews did attend the synagogue services. The sabbath gathering of people to the synagogue to discuss matters of religion and morals and proper lifestyle was not restricted to the Jews, and was a common public meeting for people to listen to wise counsel.

What a perfect opportunity for Paul and other Christians to witness to both the Jews and the other people attending. Recognised as a Jew, he could take part in the discussion right up front, and offer Christian interpretations of the texts being discussed, and thereby win people to Christ. But nothing, absolutely nothing in the text even suggests that he attended the synagogue on this day because he felt obliged to keep the sabbath holy. His own words on the matter of the sabbath in his letters prove that he believed no such thing – in fact he labels sabbath keeping a weakness in chapter 14 of his letter to the Romans. He was no more keeping the sabbath by preaching to the Jews on the sabbath than he is keeping any Roman or pagan feasts by using their gatherings to preach to them, as is recorded in Acts 17, where he refers to pagan altars which he does not reject, but proclaims that they actually refer to the one true God. No, these texts do not refer to Paul keeping the sabbath. All he did was preach on the sabbath to people who were gathered on the sabbath, just as he would preach on a Tuesday to those who gathered somewhere on a Tuesday. The Bible says no more than that, and the context makes it obvious. To read sabbath observance into these texts is to add something to the Bible that simply is not there.

Also, the Gentiles flocked to hear the Apostles preach wherever they preached, sabbath or

otherwise, so naturally one would expect Gentiles to be present at the synagogue on the sabbath. They would not be there on Mondays or Wednesdays because there were no gatherings in the synagogue on these days when the Apostles could preach.

The Adventists claim that the Apostles were there for worship and sabbath observance is faulty for another reason.

2 Cor 6:14-17 – Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

Are we to believe that, contrary to his own advice, Paul worshipped alongside unbelievers? Or should we take the text at face value, without reading a worship service into a text that does not indicate Christian worship, and without meddling with the context of the text? This passage may refer to marriage, but how much more it would apply to true worship.

I should reiterate here my response to the commonly used Adventist argument that they came back again to the Jewish service on the next sabbath, not the next day to a Christian service. Because it was a set weekly gathering for the Jews, obviously if Paul went along on a Sunday, a Monday, a Tuesday, etc., the place would not have a crowd gathered to listen. It was the Jewish nature of this gathering that made it happen every sabbath. And it was because Christian worship services were not generally witnessing events that those who wanted to return did not simply attend the next Christian service. Christian services were meant for Christians to worship God and celebrate the Lord's Supper, while they were not designed to be services to witness to people. Even today, there is a huge difference between a gathering for the purposes of worship, and a gathering for the purposes of evangelisation, and there is a huge difference between the sermon a pastor will prepare for those who are already Christians, and one he will prepare for a group of non-Christian people he hopes to bring the Gospel message to. So the Adventist argument that, had Christians observed Sunday, they would have come for more of Paul's preaching the very next day, not the next sabbath, fails, because Adventists fail to consider the difference between a Christian service where Christians worshipped, and an event where they witnessed to unbelievers. The passage from 2 Corinthians puts this in perspective.

So, in summary, I don't see why this text refers to Christian sabbath observance.

Addendum

Let's count the number of groups mentioned in Acts 13:42-44 as they leave the synagogue:

Acts 13:42-44 – And when the **Jews** were gone out of the synagogue [Jews: group 1], the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. Now when

the congregation [the rest of the congregation: group 2] was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes [those who accepted Paul's message and followed him: group 3] followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

Three groups:

1. Group 1 – Jews who did not believe and did not follow Paul
2. Group 2 – Others (Gentiles) who did not believe and did not follow Paul
3. Group 3 – Those who did believe and did follow Paul

Note the timeline.

1. Group 1 leaves
2. Gentiles want to hear more the next week
3. Group 2 leaves – these are the people who wanted to hear more the next week
4. Group 3 follows Paul

It's the Gentiles, who do not all follow Paul, that want him to come back the next week. They'd be attending the Jewish sabbath service in the synagogue, and hoped to hear more then. Those who followed Paul and Barnabas immediately didn't need to wait for the next Jewish service to hear Paul – surely they got to hear more much sooner than that.

Chapter 27: Acts 15 – do Christians keep the sabbath in Acts?

Acts 15:1-2, 5-6 – And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. ... But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.

Acts 15:19-21 [James speaking:] – Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

Acts 15:24-31 [Letters written:] – Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well, Fare ye well. So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.

Here we see the debate concerning observance of Old Covenant laws in the Christian community come to a close, as far as formal decisions are concerned.

The decision of the Apostles was that the Old Covenant laws did not apply to Christians except for “*meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication.*” No mention of the sabbath.

This is a far stronger argument than Adventism’s argument from silence. This is a list of things that Gentile Christians were told to do. If they had to keep the sabbath, then it would have to have been included in this list. It was not included. That says a lot.

No even circumcision was necessary – and, if you recall from Genesis, circumcision was a

perpetual sign given for all generations. It was a sign of the very identity of the Jewish people, under the Mosaic Covenant. And here the Apostles stated that it was no longer necessary. Paul tells us that there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile – it was not a case of setting up double standards – one set of laws for the Jewish Christians, and another for the Gentiles. Traditions and customs were tolerated, but inflicting unnecessary practices was not allowed – so the Jewish Christians could continue with their traditional way of worship as they felt comfortable, but the Gentile Christians were not obliged to adopt the Mosaic Law.

So, apart from these items on the Apostles' list, there were no parts of the law of Moses that the Christians needed to keep. Obviously they still had to follow moral principles as explained in numerous passages by Jesus and the Apostles, but there is NO command to keep the sabbath, and it is glaringly absent from this list, which explicitly includes the sign of their identity, circumcision, which predates the sabbath.

Adventists don't believe that the Church today has the authority shown by the Church in Acts 15. Catholics can't find in their Bible where that authority was taken away.

Chapter 28: Acts 16 – do Christians keep the sabbath in Acts?

Acts 16:12-15 – And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

Acts 16:13 is different to the other references to the sabbath in Acts, but nothing in this text suggests this was a Christian worship service. Yes, it was the sabbath, but that is simply the day of the week on which it occurred. Just like at times other days of the week are named, there is NOTHING in this text that implies that this was a sabbath service. Christians can and do worship on ANY day of the week – this was nothing special.

One Adventist made the following statement:

The KJV Bible refers to meeting by the riverside because of a lack of men to build a synagogue.

Actually, the text says nothing like that. Nowhere in the KJV text do we see something that suggests that the men were not available to build a synagogue.

What we see here is a group of non-Christian Jewish women who had gathered on the sabbath to pray. The fact that Lydia is Jewish is proven by the fact that she is called a “worshipper of God” but she is certainly non-Christian because she is not yet baptised, and at that point, had not yet converted. We are told her heart was opened to the Gospel and that she and her household were then baptised.

In fact, she was still a “*seller of purple goods*” – that, if you research what “*purple goods*” are, means that she made the special purple garments the Levites and Pharisees wore, using a unique kind of dye. That was not a Christian occupation – it was distinctly Jewish.

That means she was Jewish (it’s unlikely a non-Jew would sell purple) and not Christian prior to Paul preaching the Gospel to her and her acceptance of it.

So, these are some of the Philippian Jews that Paul meets – so the primary gathering was a Jewish gathering, not a Christian gathering. If it was a special sabbath gathering or not, we don’t know – that much is not revealed. But the text does not say that Paul was going there to worship because it was the sabbath, nor even does it say he was going there to worship. It does say that it was the sabbath, but the way that is mentioned in the sentence indicates that the sabbath was not related to

his need for prayer, but rather was mentioned to give us a time frame – where this all fitted into that time. If Paul only ever prayed on the sabbath, then perhaps this text can be used as evidence of Paul's keeping the sabbath – but I don't see any evidence for that – the fact that Paul and his travelling party wanted to pray does not make the day it happened on any more observed by him than any other day.

In summary, this was not a Christian worship service, but a Jewish gathering which Paul and his party came across.

Chapter 29: Acts 17 – do Christians keep the sabbath in Acts?

Acts 17:1-5 – Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

Acts 17:16-17 – Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.

Adventists state that it was Paul's manner to witness in the synagogue on the sabbath, and from that they conclude that he worshipped there too at the same time. The text does not use the word "worship" and the word "manner" does not imply worship either.

Why does Luke actually mention that this was Paul's "custom" or "manner" or "tradition"? Luke is writing Acts for a Gentile Christian audience. Had they been keeping the sabbath, they would certainly not have needed such an explanation, telling them that it was his custom to go there on this specific day of the week. Why on earth would a sabbath keeper, talking about another sabbath keeper, addressing sabbath keepers, need to specify that this was Paul's custom? The answer – he would NOT have had to. From this we can see that the readers of Acts (and Luke) are unfamiliar with the institution of the sabbath – they are not themselves sabbath keepers. And the interesting thing is that they are well established Christians of Gentile origin, and Luke makes no attempt whatsoever to instruct them to keep the sabbath like Paul or Jesus – all he does is explain their actions as being their custom. See also the section on Jesus' custom being explained by Luke.

History and this text indicate to us that the Gentile Christians were NOT sabbath keepers, and that in order to not isolate them from Jesus and Paul by attributing such a foreign practice to them, Luke states clearly that was their custom, one word which explained to them the action, and at the same time showed them that it was ONLY a custom and not a requirement that all Christians were expected to observe.

Further, if we are to believe that Paul worshipped with the unbelievers in the synagogue on the sabbath, we should be consistent, and believe that he did the same with the unbelievers he talked to in the market place. Alternatively, we can believe that he was witnessing to unbelievers wherever he saw the opportunity – in marketplace gatherings, or in the synagogues. That is what the verse is telling us – about witnessing events, not Christians worshipping alongside unbelievers.

Another Adventist argument is that by this time, 50 AD, it was “*well past any permanent change to the first day of the week that would have been made.*”

This is entirely irrelevant. Assume scenario A: that the majority of Christians already observed Sunday. Then Acts 17:2 is only saying that Paul attended the sabbath gatherings at the synagogues/temple because the Jews gathered on this day. This is not refuted by the text, and is actually supported by the rest of the New Testament where Paul denounces the sabbath observances – Rom 14, Gal 4, Col 2. Acts 20:7 also references a Christian service on Sunday.

But assume scenario B, for which there is zero, zip, nil, no biblical evidence – the Christians still observed the sabbath as a law they were obliged to keep. First, I can’t accept this because of a complete lack of evidence, as opposed to quite a substantial biblical backing for the abandonment of the sabbath and acceptance of Sunday. Second, does it make a difference? It was only at the Council of Jerusalem that the issue of circumcision was finally put to rest, and that was also around this time – Acts 15. If circumcision could be abolished – by the power of the Holy Spirit leading the Church to see the truth – then the same could happen at such a date (even later) with the sabbath. God did not change the Church in a day – he let it grow, he nurtured it, and he taught it in HIS time. Those who want to see Jesus abolishing everything and pronouncing everything we need to know in the Gospels ignore the witness of the rest of the New Testament as to the way the Church was built up by God – BOTH as the Chosen People of the Old Testament, AND as the Ekklesia of the New.

Chapter 30: Acts 18 – do Christians keep the sabbath in Acts?

Act 18:1-4 – After these things Paul departed from Athens and came to Corinth; And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; because that (Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

(Act 18:11) And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Yes, 72 sabbaths spent preaching to unbelievers in a service organised by unbelievers. That was not a series of Christian worship services. In fact, every single such sabbath gathering mentioned in Acts is of the same type – a NON-Christian service that some Christians were also attending to witness to those who had not yet accepted Christ.

If your local Adventist pastor spent 72 Sundays preaching to Sunday-keepers in a Sunday-keeping church hall, would he be keeping Sunday? No ... by the same logic, these texts are not evidence of sabbath observance by Paul or other Christians.

A Christian service is NOT a non-Christian service attended by Christians. Just like a Catholic Mass is NOT an Adventist Mass when it's attended by Adventists. Adventists would never call the Mass an Adventist service if their pastor merely attended, but they don't want to same logic extended to the Bible.

Next we must ask, what was Jesus doing by attending the synagogue on the sabbath, and what was Paul doing? First, Jesus – remember that there isn't a biblical command to gather together on the sabbath (as far as I am aware) – the command is to REST on the sabbath, to keep it HOLY. Synagogue attendance was not compulsory as part of a sabbath obligation like attendance at Mass is for Catholics on Sundays. The reason Jesus went to the synagogue was therefore NOT as part of his required sabbath observance, but rather because this was a convenient time to find all the Jews gathered together. Generally, although not as part of their duty to obey the sabbath commandment, Jews gathered together in the synagogue to do Bible (Old Testament) study and hear the preaching of the wiser men, like the priests. Jesus was included in this group, as is seen in the text of the Bible, where he gets up to read from the Bible (Isaiah) and gives a brief comment on it afterwards. So attendance at the synagogue cannot be seen as obedience to the sabbath commandment – it was merely taking the right opportunity because the Jews were all in one place on this day. YES – Jesus DID obey the sabbath commandment, but this is because he was still under the old law of Moses, which included the ceremonial weekly sabbath day observance. He kept the law perfectly.

What was Paul's intent by attending the synagogue on the sabbath? As we can discover from

looking at Judaism from around that time, attendance at the synagogue was not a part of the sabbath day obligation to rest and keep the day holy. It was merely a good opportunity for the studying of God's word, and for hearing wise sermons. By attending the synagogue Paul was not fulfilling ANY sabbath day obligation to rest or keep the day holy. In fact, the Bible reveals what the purpose of his visits were – to preach. This was the perfect opportunity to preach to the yet unbelieving Jews about Jesus, and since it was a time when general wisdom was shared and discussed, many unbelieving Gentiles were in attendance too. Many Christians of both Jewish and Gentile origin ALSO attended, no doubt, to a) spread the Gospel message, b) hear the wisdom preached by Paul and the other Apostles. So Paul could not have been fulfilling any sabbath obligation by attending services on Saturday – it is revealed in the Bible that his purpose was to preach. There was no better time to do this – on Sunday through Friday the Jews would be doing their own thing, and Paul could not preach to them as a group. On these days, as Acts 17 on Mars Hill reminds us, he would often attend general public meetings led by philosophers of other religions. No-one claims that attendance at a Gentile religious discussion on a week day was an observance of this particular week day, and therefore if Paul and the Apostles preached to unbelievers EVERY day of the week, we cannot claim that because they ALSO did it on Saturday, we must observe Saturday as holy.

We need to find in the Bible a specific day of the week which Christians kept holy, on which Christians held *private* worship services for Christians only (Paul tells us that only Christians were allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper.) We find NOT ONE text that tells us Christians observed Saturday. Yet we find several texts that tell us that Christians DO NOT HAVE TO observe Saturday – Gal 4:10-11, Col 2:16, Rom 14:5-6. Col 2:16 uses a term that ALWAYS refers to the weekly sabbath wherever else it is used in the Bible, and tells us that the weekly sabbath (as well as the other festivals like Passover) are mere shadows of Christ. If we do not have to keep the shadow Passover, why must we keep the shadow sabbath? After all, God revealed both of these days directly through Moses.

Chapter 31: Gen 2:2-3 – Did Adam keep the sabbath?

Gen 2:1-3 – Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

Sabbatarians often use this text to show the importance of the sabbath, and even that Adam kept the sabbath.

But the words “*Adam knew about the sabbath*” are not in the text. The text does NOT say that Adam rested. It says that GOD rested.

Sabbatarians tell us that when God wrote the 10 commandments for his people, who had been captives for 400 years, He was reminding them of their beginning. Yes, he was. And by keeping Sunday, we are remembering – and celebrating – OUR roots as Christians. We no longer even WANT to remember our roots in sinful Adam, because we have been rescued from that. Before Christ, we were part of a creation that turned to sin. After Christ, we are part of a new sinless creation. And it is on Sunday that we remember and celebrate this.

Chapter 32: Isaiah 66 – sabbath keeping in heaven?

Isa 66:20-24 – And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the LORD out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD. And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the LORD. For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

Adventists will tell you that this passage, particularly verse 23, shows that in the Kingdom of God, we will be keeping the sabbath. That is a twisting of that text. The text says that people worshipped FROM one sabbath TO the next. It does NOT say that people worshipped ON one sabbath AND the next. If you understood Hebrew and/or English grammar, you would realise that this refers to continuous worship on Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday and again the next Saturday ... from the one given point in time until the next given point in time. This verse is talking about perpetual worship, not worship on Saturdays only. And why is the sabbath used as a delineation of the unit of perpetual worship? Well, the book was written by Isaiah, a sabbath keeper writing to sabbath keepers. It is only natural that he would use imagery that they would understand. But it is dishonest to interpret this text as claiming that the sabbath will be kept in the Kingdom of God, because that is NOT what the text says at all.

Please go and re-read Isaiah 66:23 above – it says “*from one sabbath to the next*”.

If I said the following, how would you interpret it? “*X-Files shows on TV every Friday night, and from one Friday to the next I wait in anticipation.*”

Would you say that I am waiting ONLY on the Friday in question, or do you think I am waiting ALL the time between one Friday and the next? Using basic English, we know that I am not just waiting ON the Fridays, I am waiting continuously – from one Friday all the time right until the next.

So why do Adventists change the basic meaning of this phrase when it comes to this particular verse? Why does “*from one sabbath to the next*” have to be interpreted “*ON one sabbath AND the next*” here, in spite of it meaning something different in actual English?

Also, the text mentioned “*from one new moon until the next*” as well.

If the text proves that Christians should keep the sabbath, then surely the same text also proves that Christians should keep the new moon. There were three groups of festivals in the Old Testament –

annual festivals (Passover, Day of Atonement, etc.) and there were monthly festivals – the observance of the new moon on the first day of the lunar month cycle, and then there were weekly festivals – the 7th day sabbath.

So, if Passover and those other annual festivals are done away with in Col 2:14-17, then Isaiah 66:23 must be showing us that we must STILL keep the other TWO festivals – the weekly sabbath and the monthly New Moon. Do Adventists keep the New Moon every month? No! So why is there a difference between the New Moon and the sabbath here, when the text says we will be keeping both?

Looking closer, Isaiah 66 never actually states that we will KEEP the sabbath, OBSERVE the sabbath. The text simply uses the sabbath as a point in time by which to reference the fact that our worship of God is CONTINUOUS ... like Hebrews tells us about the New sabbath which replaces the old 7th day sabbath – TODAY when you hear his voice, harden not your hearts. We live TODAY, we worship TODAY – continuously, not weekly.

The only reason Isaiah uses the term sabbath is because he is writing to sabbath keepers to whom this particular moment in time is important. It is a reference point with which they can identify. But the grammar prevents us from interpreting the text as a prophecy of the sabbath being kept in the future.

Going further, proving that this does not literally apply to the Christian context: verse 21 mentions priests and Levites ... show me where we have Old Covenant priests and Levites in ANY Christian context – Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, even Adventist ... they are not there. This priesthood mentioned does not exist any more – it is written using Old Covenant symbolism. It is essential to accept that the symbolism used is that which the author and his readers knew personally, and cannot (like the Levitical priest bit) be taken literally in our context.

Then, we see in verse 22 that there are new heavens and a new earth. Because it is convenient for their theology, Adventists – without looking further – assume that this means that the world will have ended, and since it has not, the law is still intact. Yet there is sufficient evidence in the New Testament to prove quite reasonably that the new heavens and new earth HAVE already come! Heb 9:26 says Jesus came at the end of an age – the age of the Old Covenant. To the Jews and early Christians, that was sufficient to be described in the metaphor of the day as the heavens and earth passing and a new heaven and earth replacing it.

Chapter 33: Isaiah 66 – from one sabbath to another

I got this e-mail from Dr Verle Streifling, an ex-Adventist theologian, where he comments on my article on the use of Isaiah 66:23 by Adventists to show sabbath observance in heaven:

I've read your good notes re Isa 66:23. Since the Greek word 'sabbatwv' is used for either the 'sabbath' or the 'week' (as Matt 28:1 meaning 'After the Sabbath' or 'In the end of the week, as it was dawning into the first day of the week' (mia twv sabbatwv is first of the week,) then too from Isa 66:23 this use may well be fitting, so that he says:

"From one week to another, and from one month to another..." NOT thinking of the Jew's weekly feasts or monthly feasts, but simply of the continual passing of times of continual worship to YHWH.

Yet of course another insight in 66:22+23 is that this describes "ALL FLESH" not just the JEWS, and still another is that Isaiah is not really speaking of the TIME of the New Heaven and New Earth, but of the Christian church age, and in the end of this Church age, for vs 24 describes the destruction of the wicked whose flesh would be eaten by the birds (Ezekiel) or who at least are strewn all over the place, (which would not speak of the New Heaven and New Earth, but Armageddon's destruction).

Where SDA misreads this is by applying the New Heaven and New Earth of vs 22, NOT where God applied it (to how long Israel's seed would remain) but misapplying it to vs 23 which is a change of subject from vs 22!

Further, this cannot apply to Heaven, neither to the Eternal State of the New Earth, for Revelation tells us that by this time, "Time will be, or continue to exist, NO MORE." It says there will be No Sun nor Moon, needed, "for the Lord God Almighty is the Light thereof", and "there will be NO NIGHT there". This tells us that in this eternal state, there will be NO Measuring of time, as with days and nights, and so there will be NO Sabbaths, or Weeks, or Months, in the New Heaven and New Earth.

Another phenomenal reading error, but it fits with their Scholarship – EGW's interpretation and so even today they hold it, while they would know that this is in error.

Chapter 34: Exod 31 / Deut 5 / Neh 9 / Ezek 20 – to whom was the sabbath given, as a sign of what?

The sabbath prior to Moses

Before I discuss whether or not the sabbath was known to any part of mankind prior to the time of Moses, we should take a look at certain key passages.

Exod 31:12-18 – And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed. And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.

Deut 5:1-2 – And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.

Neh 9:13-14 – Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant:

Ezek 20:9-13 – But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt. Wherefore I caused them to go out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them my statutes, and showed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them. Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them. But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them.

A sign between God and whom?

Exod 31:12-17 – this text clearly states between which two parties the Covenant is, and what the sign of the covenant is. The covenant is between God and Israel, according to the text. That means it was not a sign between mankind and God – there were other humans besides Israel, and the covenant was not with them. The sabbath was to be the sign of this covenant God made with them at Sinai.

Deut 5:2-3, speaking of the same covenant, says that that covenant was not made with their fathers – it was made with them for the first time. Moses states explicitly that it was not with anyone before this time that God made this covenant. This covenant began at this time, at the time of Moses.

Ezek 20:12 shows that God gave the sabbath to Israel in the time of Moses. It was then that God revealed the sabbath to them. We see God contrasting Israel with the other nations – and he says it was to Israel that he revealed his principles, including the sabbath. So he obviously did not reveal the sabbath to other nations.

Neh 9:9-14 tells us that the sabbath was made known to Israel through Moses. We know it is Israel of which Ezekiel and Nehemiah speak because of the description given – these were the people God took out of Egypt, through the Red Sea. The text says nothing about any other people, and it says nothing about the sabbath being known before this time.

So, if the sabbath is a sign of the Old Covenant (Deut 5:2-3, Exod 31:17), and the Old Covenant was given to Israel (Ex 31:17) and not anyone else (Deut 5:2-3), then why are Adventists claiming that the sabbath needs to be kept by all mankind?

Where in the Bible does God EVER criticise anyone not of the chosen nation of Israel for not observing the sabbath? Nowhere.

Where in the Bible does God ever say that people not of the chosen nation of Israel should keep the sabbath? Nowhere.

These verses point out that the sabbath was a sign between GOD and ISRAEL, that it was given as a sign of the OLD COVENANT, and that this covenant was NOT made with their fathers. Scripture speaks of God giving ISRAEL the sabbath, not MAN, and NOT anyone before the time of Moses. It was to the people at the time of Moses that God first made known his sabbath. With these verses, and a total lack of any text in the Bible that indicates anyone prior to Moses knew about the sabbath, anyone without an agenda to push the sabbath would come to the obvious conclusion that the sabbath was given first to Moses.

If the Old Covenant was given to Israel at the time of Moses, and we can see that above, and if the sabbath was made known to them at this time, and it was the sign of the Old Covenant, it is impossible for the sabbath to have been given by God to any human prior to the time of Moses. Deuteronomy is clear – this covenant was not a pre-existing covenant that was handed down from their fathers, and ratified again at Sinai. This was a totally new covenant, never before given to any

human.

The 10 commandments are called the tablets of that covenant. The sabbath is the sign of that covenant. If you read about the nature of this covenant – what it was, what the sign of it was, to whom it was given, and to whom it was NOT given – it is clear that the sabbath was part of this covenant, and was therefore not revealed before the time this covenant came – the life of Moses, the coming out of Egypt.

Prior covenants had their signs – Noah’s covenant had the rainbow, Abraham’s had circumcision. With the Mosaic Covenant, God revealed the sabbath to them. The two go hand in hand.

That doesn’t mean that the sabbath could not point back to creation – it did (Exod 31:17.) It also pointed back to the exodus from Egypt (Deut 2:15.) It also pointed forward in time to the rest we as Christians have found in Christ.

Yes, it was mentioned at creation by God the Father, addressing the Son, the Spirit, and the angelic host. But it was first revealed to human beings in the days of Moses, according to the passages of Scripture above. There is no evidence anywhere in the Bible to state otherwise, no evidence that Adam, Noah, Abraham or anyone else before the time of Moses ever knew about, or kept, the 7th day sabbath – and so this, as a clear statement in the Bible, goes uncontradicted by other biblical texts.

All I am asking Adventists to do is this: do not add your own wishes to the Bible and expect others to accept them, when the Bible actually says that this is not the case. These verses point out that the sabbath was a sign between GOD and ISRAEL, that it was given as a sign of the OLD COVENANT, and that this covenant was NOT made with their fathers. It speaks of God giving ISRAEL the sabbath, not MAN, and NOT anyone before the time of Moses. It was to the people at the time of Moses that God first made known his sabbath. With these verses, and a total lack of any text in the Bible that indicates anyone prior to Moses knew about the sabbath, anyone without a sabbath-promoting agenda would come to the obvious conclusion that the sabbath was given first to Moses.

For New Testament confirmation, see Gal 3:17, which says that the law only came to men 430 years AFTER Abraham – that is the law that contained the sabbath.

Some Adventists will deny that the sabbath pictures Christ’s rest, because Col 2:16 talks about a shadow of the reality we find in Christ. For the purposes of getting around Col 2:16, they make the sabbath look back to the original creation, and the other annual holy days look forward to Christ. They then state that we must look back in time to the original sabbath Adam and Eve kept in the Garden of Eden, forgetting that the Bible doesn’t state anywhere that Adam and Eve kept the sabbath – and denying what the passages listed above clearly state.

To get this right, they play a word game – they confuse the meaning of the term “remember”. “Remember” is also a synonym for “observe”. Consider the following: when you ask your friends, your husband or wife, your children definitely, to remember your birthday, are you asking them to cast their minds back to the day you were born? Your children cannot do that for sure. But you use

the word “remember” anyway. It means that they must remember it – remember to observe it – when the time comes. And that is what the sabbath commandment says.

A perpetual covenant?

Adventists also argue that the sabbath is called a perpetual sign for all generations, and therefore it can never pass away. But God also refers to circumcision as a perpetual covenant in Genesis 17:11-13, to incense as one in Exod 30:8, to the Levitical priesthood as one in Exod 29:9. All these so-called perpetual covenants have been done away with at the cross. Just because they are called perpetual covenants does not mean that their purpose will never come to an end. They have been fulfilled. The covenant they symbolised was fulfilled, and came to a close. Circumcision was for ALL Abraham’s generations, yet although we are part of that people, circumcision is not necessary for Christians. The same goes for the sabbath.

The sabbath shall cease

Speaking of the New Covenant, the Old Testament prophesies of a time when the sabbath shall cease – Isa 1:13-16, Hosea 2:11, Jer 31:31-4.

Hosea 2:11 – I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.

Isaiah 1:13-16 – Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

Jer 31:31-34 – Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they broke, although I was a husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

St Paul tells us that the law has indeed been written on our hearts (2 Cor 3:6-14) – we are a New Covenant people. Our nature has been changed through baptism, we are a new creation in Christ.

Someone who understands what the Bible is telling us will realise that the sabbath and circumcision are merely signs of the Old Covenant, and since the New Covenant is now in place, we must follow

the signs of the New Covenant and NOT the Old Covenant. Therefore modern Christians baptise instead of circumcise, and they gather together on Sunday (1 Cor 16:2) instead of Saturday.

Chapter 35: The sabbath first revealed to man

Exodus 16:23,26 – And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning. ... [26] Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none.

Exodus 16 is the very first time in the Bible when anyone is told to keep the sabbath. What has just happened is that Israel has come out of Egypt. If we compare Exodus 20 to Deut 5, we get two things that the sabbath represents. First – creation (in the Exodus text). Second – coming out of Egypt (in the Deuteronomy text). God's intention must have been to have a dual symbolism there.

Exodus 20:11 – For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Deut 5:15 – And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.

If God had revealed the sabbath prior to Israel's exodus from Egypt, the intended symbolism would have been incomplete. However, that doesn't mean he could not have done so. We just have no evidence that he did so.

Assuming that he did so prior to the exodus, it would still not mean that the sabbath was going to last forever. Physical circumcision was given to Abraham long before the exodus, but we know from the New Testament that it is no longer necessary. Circumcision obtained a spiritual meaning, as did the sabbath. All covenants prior to the New Covenant ceased their literal and legal role and became spiritually applicable in the New Covenant. Their literal signs were turned into spiritual applications. The Abrahamic covenant and the Mosaic covenant extended now to all of humanity. Circumcision was of the heart, the sabbath was our rest in Christ, the sacrifices were now Jesus' sacrifice, the Levitical priesthood was now the priesthood of all believers.

Unlike circumcision, the sabbath was not initially given as a part of a covenant. Until it was, it had the impact of any other non-covenant law given by God. Only when it was included in the words of the Old Covenant, the 10 Commandments, did that happen.

After the exodus, God started to reveal the sabbath which had its dual symbolism completed. That happened for the first time in Exodus 16. There is no evidence to the contrary, and adequate evidence that this was the first time the sabbath was revealed.

Also worth highlighting is that the dual symbolism of the sabbath has a clear fulfilment in the New Testament.

Creation → new creation in Christ.

Freedom from slavery in Egypt → freedom from slavery to sin through Christ.

Sabbath rest → rest in Christ.

Further reading:

[Did Abraham Observe the Sabbath?](#) ... by Ernest L. Martin

Chapter 36: The sabbath and the Old Covenant, part 1

This will be a 3-part series, dealing with the following issues:

Part 1

The status of the sabbath in Christianity can be determined as follows:

1. The sabbath commandment is one of the 10 Commandments.
2. The 10 Commandments are the words of the Old Covenant
3. The sabbath was the sign of the Old Covenant

Part 2

4. What is the New Covenant's legal code?

The Old Covenant has been set aside and replaced – the 10 Commandments are no longer a binding legal code for Christians.

5. St Paul says the 10 Commandments are a “*ministration of death*”

Part 3

6. Legal analogies and Adventist confusion

7. The biblical evidence does not support sabbath observance by Christians

Supplementary: The 10 Commandments and the New Law in Catholic teaching

Introduction

If you ask the average Christian, “*Should we obey the 10 Commandments?*” they will likely say “Yes.” Enter the Adventist, who then asks why the average Christian doesn't keep the 4th commandment, which states that we should keep the sabbath. And so, as the Adventist hoped, the average Christian is often left wondering. Or appealing to the other biblical evidence against Christian sabbath keeping. Or suggesting things like “*We only need to keep one day in seven*” or “*We only need to keep the moral law, not the ceremonial law of the Old Testament.*”

None of those answers is fully satisfactory. It is true that there is a tremendous base of evidence in the Bible that Christians do not need to keep the 7th day sabbath. It is true that the ceremonial law of the Old Testament is no longer relevant to Christians, and it is true that the timing of the sabbath is part of that ceremonial aspect. It is true that we should obey the moral laws given in the Bible. It is not entirely true that we should keep one day in seven, but I will not be arguing against that view here.

The Adventist question is left largely unanswered. If we are meant to obey the 10 Commandments, as they were written by the finger of God on stone tablets and given to Moses, then surely we need to keep the sabbath the way it was intended in that set of laws? If the 10 Commandments are binding on Christians, then the Adventists argument is a problematic one. Considering that it is clear from the Bible and from history that we do not need to keep the 7th day sabbath, their argument must be flawed. There are several very good attempts to answer it that I've come across, so it's not as if the Adventist argument cannot be refuted. I will present what I believe is the most

logical.

Adventists and other Sabbatarians constitute a very small portion of Christianity. Most of the time someone hears “*Must we keep the 10 Commandments?*” it’s in the context of “*Do we have to follow any sort of moral code?*” In that context, the answer is clearly **YES**. And without a doubt, the 10 Commandments are the best known moral code in existence.

Nearly all Christian denominations share a belief in the importance of the 10 Commandments as a code to guide our morals. Certainly the Catholic Church does (emphasis mine throughout this post):

Since they express man’s fundamental duties towards God and towards his neighbor, the Ten Commandments reveal, in their primordial content, grave obligations. They are fundamentally immutable, and they oblige always and everywhere. No one can dispense from them. The Ten Commandments are engraved by God in the human heart.
– [Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 2072](#)

However, we also all acknowledge that the Decalogue was the actual set of words making up the Old Covenant (Deut 4:13, Exod 34:28). We all acknowledge that the Old Covenant was replaced with the New. Even Paul (2 Cor 3:7) acknowledges that the law written on stone (what other law was written on stone?) has been replaced.

In a world where 99% of the time we are concerned with what is and isn’t moral, statements, like CCC 2072 above, from all Christian denominations make perfect sense. And they are right – the 10 Commandments are VERY applicable to Christians.

But there is a catch. A technicality often missed today.

The status of the sabbath in Christianity can be determined as follows:

1. The sabbath commandment is one of the 10 Commandments.

Of this nobody is in doubt. See Exodus 20:8 and Deuteronomy 5:12.

2. The 10 Commandments are the words of the Old Covenant

Most Christians believe that we are not under the Old Covenant, but rather under the New Covenant. While many individual Christians may not realise it, most Christian traditions acknowledge that the 10 Commandments are part of the Old Covenant.

What is the biblical evidence for this idea?

Deut 4:13 – [And he declared unto you **his covenant**, which he commanded you to perform, even **ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone.**](#)

Deut 5:1-3 – [And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The LORD our God made a **covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers**, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day. \(The](#)

10 Commandments are then spoken by Moses)

Deut 9:9 – When I was gone up into the mount to receive the **tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant** which the LORD made with you, then I abode in the mount forty days and forty nights, I neither did eat bread nor drink water

Exod 20:1 – And God spake all **these words**, saying (This is Moses speaking; the 10 Commandments are then spoken by Moses after being given them by God)

Exod 34:38 – And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And **he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.**

The 10 Commandments – the words of the Old Covenant. His covenant ... ten commandments. If the Old Covenant has been abolished, then its legal code went with it. If we are under a New Covenant, the New Covenant has its own legal code.

For those who think that the 10 Commandments being written in stone makes them permanent, see what Moses did in Exodus 32:19:

Exodus 32:19 – And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and **brake them** beneath the mount.

If that is not symbolic of the eventual abolishing of the 10 Commandments, it's at least a sign that being written in stone doesn't mean something is permanent.

1 Kings 8:9 – There was **nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone**, which Moses put there at Horeb, when the LORD made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt

1 Kings 8:21 – And I have set there a place for **the ark, wherein is the covenant of the LORD, which he made with our fathers**, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt.

2 Chronicles 6:11 – And in it have I put **the ark, wherein is the covenant of the LORD, that he made with the children of Israel.**

What was in the ark? Nothing except the tablets of stone (1 Kings 8:9). What was in the Ark? The Old Covenant (1 Kings 8:21, 2 Chronicles 6:11)

Hebrews 9:4 – Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and **the tables of the covenant.**

The tables of the covenant were certainly inside, but there is debate amongst scholars as to the discrepancy regarding the manna and Aaron's rod. This is not the issue here, and the reader is

referred to [John Gill's Expositor](#) for a good explanation of this. The additional items were probably added later.

3. The sabbath was the sign of the Old Covenant

See Chapter 34 for the details.

In short:

Exod 31:12-13 – And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.

Exod 31:16-18 – Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant*. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever*: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed. And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.

*See Chapter 34 for discussion of the covenant being “perpetual”.

Deut 5:1-3 – And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.

Neh 9:13-14 – Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them [Israel] from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant

Ezek 20:12 – Moreover also I gave them [Israel] my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them.

The sabbath was given as part of the Old Covenant to Israel. Not before. The sabbath was part of the Old Covenant, not the New Covenant.

Further reading:

- [Why We Are Not Bound by Everything in the Old Law](#) ... Catholic Answers
- [7 Reasons to reject Sabbatarianism \(Seventh Day Sabbath Keeping\)](#) ... by Nick
- [The New Covenant: A Theology of Covenant in the New Testament](#) ... Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Communio, Winter 1995
- [Sabbath and the First Day – Why do Catholics worship on Sunday instead of Saturday?](#) ... By John Hellman

- [Dies Domini: Is Saturday the True Sabbath?](#) ... by Jacob Michael
- [Sabbath or Sunday? – The Church Fathers](#) ... Catholic Answers
- [The Covenant With Israel](#) ... by Avery Cardinal Dulles
- [On the Spirit and the Letter](#) ... by St Augustine of Hippo
- [Paul and the Law](#) ... by Jimmy Akin

Chapter 37: The sabbath and the Old Covenant, part 2

In the first part of this series, we saw that the sabbath commandment is one of the 10 Commandments, that the 10 Commandments are the words of the Old Covenant, and that the sabbath was the sign of the Old Covenant. Now we'll look at what the New Covenant's legal code is, and what the 10 Commandments are under the New Covenant.

4. What is the New Covenant's legal code?

Jeremiah 31:31-33 – Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Hebrews 8:6-10 – But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people

Hebrews 8:13 – In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

Hebrews 12:24 – And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

Hebrews 1:1-2 – God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds

Luke 22:20 – Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

Note the following contrasts:

- Old Covenant vs New Covenant – the Old under Moses, the New under Christ
- An imperfect covenant vs a better covenant – not that the Old Covenant was in error, but it

was never meant to be the final covenant, but rather a precursor.

- Law written on stone vs Law written on hearts – what St Thomas Aquinas calls the Old Law and the New Law

In the New Testament, Jesus takes the Old Covenant law and expands on it. The greatest commandments are not the 10 Commandments – they are that we should, first, love God and, second, love our neighbour. These summarise the 10 Commandments, as they do the other moral laws in the Old Testament. In the Sermon in the Mount, Jesus goes beyond the 10 Commandments. Example (emphasis mine throughout this post):

Matt 5:27-28 – Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Jesus is quoting the 10 Commandments. Yet he refers to the commandment against adultery as something the Jews had heard “*said by them of old time*”. Not God. Not Moses. Yes, God said it, and Moses told it to the Israelites. But Jesus is contrasting a precursor law with a greater law. The precursor law being the 10 Commandments, and the greater law being Jesus’ own words.

The Old Covenant has been set aside and replaced – the 10 Commandments are no longer a binding legal code for Christians.

5. St Paul says the 10 Commandments are a “ministration of death”

Throughout his epistles, St Paul speaks about how we are saved without the works of the law.

Romans 3:28 – Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

In Romans 7:7, St Paul includes the moral law “*Thou shalt not covet*” in this law.

Romans 7:5-7 – For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

St Paul also speaks of a law written on stone. What law other than the 10 Commandments was ever written on stone in the Bible?

2 Corinthians 3:3-11 – Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. ... Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so

that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

The “*ministration of death*” was “*written and engraved in stones*”. The “*ministration of death*” was glorious; that glory faded; the ministration of the Holy Spirit has an even greater glory. Clearly the “*ministration of death*” was the 10 Commandments, as the cornerstone of the Law of God revealed to Moses. No other law in the Bible was written on stone.

James 2:8,12 – If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well. ... So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

Here James tells us about a royal law – and first quotes a law not found in the 10 Commandments, but one Jesus emphasised. James then cites the 10 Commandments, and says we do well to keep these, but goes on to say that we are judged by the law of liberty. The royal law is not limited to the 10 Commandments, but clearly includes other moral laws of the Old Testament. However, the law by which we are judged is the New Covenant law, and we are freed from the Old Covenant law. James needs to be understood in the context of Paul.

Further evidence that 2 Corinthians 3 indeed refers to the 10 Commandments is the fact that “*the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance*” refers to Exodus 34:35, immediately after God gave Moses the 10 Commandments.

Exodus 34:29-30,35 – And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses’ hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him. ... And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face shone: and Moses put the vail upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

Even the Adventist paraphrased version of the Bible, the Clear Word, acknowledges plainly that this text refers to the 10 Commandments.

Clear Word, 2 Cor 3:7-8: *At Sinai God wrote the law on **tables of stone**. The giving of the **commandments** was accompanied by such glory that when Moses came down from the mountain, the Israelites couldn’t even look at him. But that glory had to pass away. When you think of the Holy Spirit writing the law on people’s hearts, isn’t that more glorious than **God writing His law on tables of stone?***

Does this mean that the 10 Commandments are no longer relevant for Christians? Certainly not. No Christian in their right mind claims such a thing. So what, then, does this mean for Christians and their relationship with the 10 Commandments?

Chapter 38: The sabbath and the Old Covenant, part 3

In the first part of this series, we saw that the sabbath commandment is one of the 10 Commandments, that the 10 Commandments are the words of the Old Covenant, and that the sabbath was the sign of the Old Covenant. In Part 2 we looked at the New Covenant's legal code, and saw that the 10 Commandments are no longer binding as a legal code under the New Covenant. Now we'll look at how the 10 Commandments still apply to Christians.

6. Legal analogies and Adventist confusion

So, technically, the 10 Commandments are not the legal code by which Christians live. This hardly gets mentioned today because it's really not necessary to mention it in most discussions of morality and the law. It's very seldom necessary to say "*Live moral lives, but by the way, the legal status of the Decalogue is revoked, but the precepts are still relevant.*" Ask the average Catholic/Protestant/Orthodox if we must obey the 10 Commandments, and they will say "Yes." The technicalities, to most Christians with the partial exception of more biblically literate Evangelicals, are hidden in history, and ultimately irrelevant ... except in discussions where Adventists bring up the argument I mentioned at the beginning of this series.

Somewhere Adventism went wrong, and missed out on what Catholicism and Orthodoxy have taught for 2000 years, and what Protestantism has taught for 500 years – that there is a difference between the legal code having current validity, and the precepts of that code retaining usefulness under another code. Adventism is not even 200 years old. The error probably crept in due to the already-discussed problem of people missing out on the technical details when these technical details are not important to the practical living of a moral life.

Adventists often suggest that if the 10 Commandments have been abolished, then we may steal and murder. That doesn't work for Christian theology, and I suspect most Adventists realise that – because the "logic" never works. The simple truth is that all the moral principles in the 10 Commandments and the rest of the Mosaic law still exist in the New Covenant law. So no, we may not steal and murder.

An analogy: in Canada, the US laws that outlaw murder do not apply. Canada, however, has its own laws against murder. But anyone in either country knows it's illegal. So it is with the Old vs New Covenants. The Old Covenant had the Decalogue; we have the Sermon on the Mount as well as a host of other biblical admonitions. In accusing other Christians of abolishing all morality by not granting the Decalogue's legal statement re the sabbath a legal status under the New Covenant, Adventists are making a huge error. The technical explanation is that in America and Canada there are two different legal codes, neither of which applies in the other country. What the average Catholic/Protestant/Orthodox is doing is the equivalent of an American arriving in Canada and saying "*I may not kill people here.*" What the average Adventist is doing is the equivalent of accusing the American of arriving in Canada and saying "*The American law against murder doesn't apply here, so we can murder freely.*"

Absurd. Similarly, the time during which the 10 Commandments were the legal code lasted from Moses until Christ. Today we are under the New Covenant moral law. In neither case may we steal and murder.

7. The biblical evidence does not support sabbath observance by Christians

See Chapters 3-40 of this book.

Conclusion

We have seen from the Bible that the sabbath is part of the Old Covenant Law, and that the 10 Commandments are part of the Old Covenant Law, which has been abolished. St Paul explicitly includes the 10 Commandments, written on tables of stone, in his thesis. Adventists, for some reason, have failed to comprehend that the 10 Commandments are part of a law no longer legally in force, and they fail to understand how we can be under a better law.

The Old Law, as a whole, was binding on Israel, but never anyone else, not even the Gentiles they lived alongside. The moral components of that law, however, were binding on all, even before the 10 Commandments were given, because they were part of the natural law anyone could grasp.

What I have explained here, I hope will help them, and others who may need to defend their faith against them. Some will argue that the Catholic Church denies this. My supplementary post (Chapter 39) will deal with that.

Christians are under the New Covenant, and therefore the legal code in effect is the New Covenant law. The Old Covenant and the words of the Old Covenant (the 10 Commandments) are not the legal code in effect today. There is therefore no legal basis for the observance of the sabbath by Christians.

In my supplementary post, I will give plenty of evidence that the Catholic Church does not deny this, and in fact it is easy to support from Catholic statements on other matters. The more common Catholic statements promoting the 10 Commandments are part of a fight against moral relativism rather than a technical appraisal of the status of a legal code. In discussions about the technical aspects of the Old Covenant, it becomes clear that the 10 Commandments, in their fundamental content, are binding on Christians, even though the 10 Commandments as a legal code are not the law in force today for Christians.

The New Law has been written on our hearts, and there is no evidence that the 7th day sabbath was included in what was written there.

The Old Law can still inform us because the moral component exists in the New Law. We can glean moral principles from the civil component of the Old Law. The ceremonial component has informed our worship. What doesn't exist in the new law: circumcision (Acts 15:24), unclean food (Mark 7:19, Acts 10:11-15, Romans 14:2-6, 1 Corinthians 10:25, 1 Timothy 4:1-5), the 7th day sabbath, etc. They are just not there. With the legal code they belonged to replaced, they are no more.

Chapter 39: The 10 Commandments and the New Law in Catholic teaching

This is a supplementary post to the 3-part series The sabbath Commandment and the Old Covenant. In Part 1 of that series, we saw that the sabbath commandment is one of the 10 Commandments, that the 10 Commandments are the words of the Old Covenant, and that the sabbath was the sign of the Old Covenant. In Part 2 we looked at the New Covenant's legal code, and saw that the 10 Commandments are no longer binding **as a legal code** under the New Covenant. In Part 3 we saw that the 10 Commandments still apply to Christians, but due to their moral content continuing in the New Covenant, even though, as the words of the Old Covenant, they no longer apply **as a legal code**.

Christians are under the New Covenant, and therefore the legal code in effect is the New Covenant law.

The Old Covenant and the words of the Old Covenant (the 10 Commandments) are not the legal code in effect today.

There is therefore no legal basis for the observance of the sabbath by Christians.

The average layman, and likely the average priest, has not needed to be taught all of this – it's not a controversy many encounter. To us it's a technicality – because the precepts of the Decalogue remain valid under the New Covenant. Just like we have to dig to find Trent's confirmation (reaffirmed in *Dies Domini*) that the Apostles were the ones who began Sunday observance, so too do we need to scratch through official Catholic statements (again Trent for one) which affirm that the Decalogue is indeed, **as a legal code**, no longer valid under the New Covenant, while the precepts underlying the Decalogue ARE found – and expanded upon – in the New Covenant (with the interesting exception of the sabbath). You'll find that more clearly expounded by Evangelical Protestants, but all of us usually simply say "*Obey the 10 Commandments*" because to obey the 10 Commandments is a sure way to obey the precepts upon which they were based.

Evangelical Protestants are more articulate when it comes to this topic, as they have developed a theology that has needed to explicitly deal with rejection of salvation by means of the law, and simultaneously express the truth that God has moral expectations of Christians. A good article by Wayne Jackson, [Did Christ Abolish the Law of Moses?](#), deals with the Adventist problems with the Law of Moses in the context of Matt 5:17.

For Catholics, that was dealt with at Trent, and we're happy with it:

If any one saith, that man may be justified before God by his own works, whether done through the teaching of human nature, or that of the law, without the grace of God through Jesus Christ; let him be anathema.

– [Council of Trent, Session 6, Decree on Justification, Canon 1](#)

Now we will look at Catholic explanations, showing that this concept of the 10 Commandments being part of the Old Covenant legal code, and **therefore not the legal code in effect today**, is indeed believed by Catholics and supported by Catholic teaching.

Catholic explanations

Modern Catholics

Catholicism doesn't always express every complexity in its full detail each time it says something. Since this is a topic Catholicism has not had the need to expressly make statements on, we have to look at related topics to find clues.

Some Catholic apologists have encountered the Adventist/Sabbatarian argument and expressed the same view as I have:

Over at Catholic Answers, Jim Blackburn states (emphasis mine throughout this chapter):

Old Testament law, as such, is not binding on Christians. It never has been. In fact, it was only ever binding on those to whom it was delivered-the Jews (Israelites). That said, some of that law contains elements of a law that is binding on all people of every place and time. ...

The Ten Commandments are often cited as examples of the natural law. Christians are obliged to follow the laws cited in the Ten Commandments **not because they are cited in the Ten Commandments – part of Old Testament law – but because they are part of the natural law – for the most part.** ...

Christians are not and have never been bound by Old Testament law for its own sake, and those elements of Old Testament law which are not part of the natural law – e.g., the obligation to worship on Saturday – were only ever binding on the Jews.

Christians do have liberty on those issues.

– [Why We Are Not Bound by Everything in the Old Law](#)

Again, in an answer to the question “*Does the Church dogmatically declare that I must believe, de fide, that the Decalogue-in every respect-is written on the hearts of all men? If so, where?*”, Jim Blackburn writes:

The Church teaches that **the Decalogue is an expression of the natural law.** ... This **does not mean, however, that the Decalogue “in every respect” is written on the hearts** of “all” men.

– [Where Is It Written, Exactly?](#)

Jim cites [CCC 1955](#):

1955 The “divine and natural” law shows man the way to follow so as to practice the good and attain his end. The natural law states the first and essential precepts which govern the moral life. ... Its **principal precepts** are expressed in the Decalogue. ...

Note that the Decalogue is an expression of the principal precepts of the divine law.

He also cites [CCC 2070](#):

2070 The Ten Commandments belong to God's revelation. At the same time they teach us the true humanity of man. They bring to light the essential duties, and therefore, indirectly, the fundamental rights inherent in the nature of the human person. The Decalogue contains a **privileged expression of the natural law**: "From the beginning, **God had implanted in the heart of man the precepts of the natural law**. Then he was content to **remind him of them. This was the Decalogue.**"

The natural law is written on our hearts. The Decalogue was a reminder.

The My Catholic Faith Delivered blog says in their post Protestant "Verses" Catholic:

Matthew 5-7 – Christ's Sermon on the Mount

... [I]t is truly the "Magna Charta" of the life Christ calls us to lead. Here we see Christ as the New Moses giving us a New Law. **While Moses brought the Old Law down to us from Mt. Sinai**, Our Lord takes the crowd (and us) up on the mountain to give us His blueprint for our eternal happiness or "beatitude."

– [Protestant "Verses" Catholic](#)

The Old Law is clearly the 10 Commandments, or at least includes them.

Again on Catholic Answers, this time Michelle Arnold:

The Old Testament Sabbath commandment contains two elements. The primary element, and the one that binds Christians as it does Jews, is the moral obligation to set aside adequate time for the purpose of divine worship. This could never be abrogated, **as it is rooted in the natural law**.

– [What about the Seventh-day Adventist claim that the sabbath shouldn't have been changed to Sunday?](#)

Again, Jim Blackburn from Catholic Answers, on their forum:

The law found in the Old Testament (**including the Ten Commandments**) is known as **the Old Law**. The Old Law was revealed to the Israelites and, as given, was **binding only on them**. ... Common to both the Old Law and the New Law is that part of the law known as natural moral law.

– [Sabbath or Sunday?](#)

Nick has a great article on Sabbatarianism, and includes the following:

The Ten Commandments are the heart of Mosaic Law and abolished as a legal code; they now only serve as guidelines. Many people think the Ten Commandments are an eternal code of laws that only accompanied the Mosaic Law, rather than being at the heart of it. Contrary to this, **the fact is the Ten Commandments were the very core of the Mosaic Law**, given specifically to the Jews, by which all other laws would be built around (see Ex 34:27-28; Deut 4:10-13; Deut 9:9). So **when Jesus ended and fulfilled the Mosaic Law, the Ten Commandments most certainly were abolished along with it!** ... After the Mosaic Law was abolished, Christians only kept the Ten Commandments format to use as guidelines for general morals (e.g. don't kill, steal, lie), but **not as a legal code** with detailed regulations and legal penalties.

– [7 Reasons to reject Sabbatarianism \(Seventh Day Sabbath Keeping\)](#)

Robert Sungenis, who is really dealing with another topic, but the 10 Commandments comes up frequently:

That is, we must affirm that the **Mosaic covenant, in toto, was legally abolished** at the cross of Christ, but that some provisions of the Mosaic law continue into the New Covenant by the Church's choice. And we must equally affirm that they continue in the New Covenant **not because the Mosaic covenant has any legal or "binding" power, but because the New Covenant incorporates them** into the legal jurisdiction of the New Covenant.

– [Scott Hahn and God's Covenant with Israel \(alternative version here\)](#)

Again, in a debate about whether the Old Covenant is still applicable to Jews:

Sungenis: And "works of the law" has always been understood to mean the divinely-inspired Mosaic statutes, **including** but not limited to rites, as apart from God's laws, **the Ten Commandments**. This parallels the Church's mutable religious disciplines, like not eating meat on Friday, versus the immutable dogma, like the divinity of Christ.

Sippo: This is not correct. Among the Catholic Fathers and Doctors, there were a variety of opinions as to what these words meant. Some saw them as referring to the Mosaic Law as a whole. Others limited it to those laws that were ceremonial.

Sungenis: Yes, there were some Fathers who understood "works of law" as referring to the ceremonies, but **those same Fathers understood that ceremonies were merely a subset** of the larger issue of "works righteousness" and that ultimately, the ceremonial law was a representation of **the whole Mosaic law that needed to be abrogated to make room for the New Covenant**. This is especially true in Justin Martyr, the one Father that Hahn has tried to use to limit "works of law" to the ceremonies.

[T]he second [quote] reveals that Justin is fully aware that the whole law was to be abrogated, not just the ceremonial law, in order for the New Law to be inaugurated. ...

"I have read, Trypho, that there will be a final law, and a covenant the most authoritative of all, which must be observed by all men who seek after the inheritance of God. That law on Horeb is old, and was only for you; but this is for all in general. A law set down after another law abrogates that which was before it, and a covenant made later likewise voids the which was earlier" [Dialogue with Trypho, 11](#).

– [Art Sippo and the Demise of Catholic Apologetics](#)

Sungenis, again on the nature of the Old Covenant with regard to the Jews:

But it's **not just the ceremonial laws** that were set aside. 2 Cor 3:7-14 says it was the laws written on stone, **the Ten Commandments, that were also part of the Old Covenant**.

– [Does the Catechism Contain a Heresy?](#)

Sungenis again:

It was the New Covenant that brought grace back into the picture, and when it came it set aside **the Old Covenant with its legal system of moral**, ceremonial and civil laws.

– [Works of the Law](#)

Sungenis on the “*works of the law*”:

As a LEGAL entity, the entire Old Covenant is abolished. But as a PRACTICAL guide to life, the entire Old Covenant is very much alive and useful for us. That is, in the New Covenant we borrow many ethical and worship principles from the Old Covenant. **We borrow the Ten Commandments** (although the New Covenant alters them a little to fit the New Covenant gospel); we borrow from some of the civil laws (e.g., paying just wages) ... But whatever we borrow and practice from the Old Covenant, it is not because the Old Covenant, in whole or in part, is itself still legally valid, but because the New Covenant has the authority to incorporate any principle from the Old Covenant ...

– [Question 166 – “Works of the Law” in the Ignatius Study Bible](#)

Jimmy Akin , in his article [Paul and the Law](#)

[W]e do not view the Torah the way the first century Jews did – as God’s binding legal code. Paul is concerned to show that Gentiles are under God’s Law too, and thus their consciences function for them like the Torah functions for the Jews – i.e., **as a medium by which God’s Law is communicated to them.** ...

Of course, the only Law which was given four centuries after Abraham was the Mosaic Law, not God’s eternal moral law. ...

From the New Testament it is clear that certain commandments in the Torah, such as “You shall not murder” are still binding on us today ...

Aquinas speaks of “the moral precepts of the Old Law,” “the civil precepts of the Old Law,” and “the ceremonial precepts of the Old Law,” but not “the moral law, the civil law, and the ceremonial law. The casting of the matter as if there were three separate laws is a misstep for several reasons. ...

The most basic reason is that in Paul’s writings he does not talk about there as being three laws given by Moses but one Law – the Torah. The Torah may be able to have its precepts classified according to some scheme ... but in Paul’s mind there is only one Torah. ...

The Torah is a united entity in Paul’s mind ... The Federal Law of the United States is a single entity ...

Because these laws are united entities, when one of them passes away, every piece of it loses its force. ...

The Torah was thus added to make the Jews aware of their sins in a way they would not have been otherwise. As Paul says, “if it had not been for the Torah, I should not have known sin. I should not have known what it is to covet **if the Torah had not said, ‘You shall not covet’**” (Rom. 7:7). ...

[T]he Torah of Israel was not suited for use as a Law in future historical epochs,

such as when the Gentiles would be included in the family of faith ... **The Torah, the Old Law, thus had to be torn down.** ... Thus the **Old Law had to be abolished** to make way for the New Law, **the Law of Moses replaced by the Law of Christ.** Of course, the New Law would reflect the eternal and the natural Law the same way the Old Law had done ... **However, it had to be replace the Old Law.**

This is what Paul means when he says the Law of Moses passed away. **He doesn't mean "The ceremonial law passed away," or "the civil and the ceremonial law passed away."** Paul doesn't know anything about three separate codes of law being given by Moses. He knows of the one Mosaic Law, as embodied in the first five books of the Bible, and he means exactly what he says – **the Torah, the Mosaic Law, passed away, as a unit, as an entity.**

However, specific precepts within that Law may still be binding on us today, **not because the Torah has any legal authority anymore,** but because those precepts are included in the eternal Law, the natural Law, or the Law of Christ, which all do have legal authority for us today. **We may still look to the Torah for instruction** by example and to learn of God's will, **but it is not legally binding on us today. We do not have to refrain from murdering because the Torah says so, but because the natural Law and the Law of Christ say so.**

– [Paul and the Law](#)

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, later to become Pope Benedict XVI, wrote [The New Covenant: A Theology of Covenant in the New Testament](#), which doesn't deal directly with the relationship between the 10 Commandments and the Old Covenant, but gives a good indication of where they belong:

In his Second Letter to the Corinthians, Paul makes a sharp antithesis between **the covenant instituted by Christ and that instituted by Moses, the one being enduring, the other transitory.** Characteristic of the Mosaic covenant is **its provisional nature, which Paul sees manifested in the stone tablets of the law.** Stone is an expression of that which is dead, and whoever remains merely in the domain of the law, remains in the realm of death. ... If at first the text emphasizes the transitory and futile nature of the Mosaic covenant ... [p638]

The covenant at Sinai appears in Exodus 34 **primarily as an "imposition of laws and obligations on the people"**. Such a covenant can also be broken. [p640]

[T]he Last Supper narratives ... present, so to speak, the **New Testament counterpart to the establishment of the covenant at Sinai** (Ex 24), and thus constitute the Christian faith in the new covenant which has been sealed in Christ. [p641]

In place of the broken covenant on Sinai, God will, as the prophet says, establish a new covenant, never to be broken again, because **it no longer confronts man as a book or as tablets of stone, but is engraved upon his heart.** [p644]

The **shattered tablets at the foot of Mt Sinai** were the first dramatic expression of the shattered covenant. When, after the exile, **the restored tablets were lost** forever ...

[p644]

The old covenant is particular, referring to the “fleshly” descendants of Abraham ...

The old covenant rests on a principle of ethnicity ... The old covenant is conditional; because it is founded on the observance of the law, and is thus essentially bound to man’s conduct, it can be and has been broken. Because its basic content is the law, it relies upon the formula: “if you do this ...” ... As far as **the covenant of Sinai is concerned ... it refer strictly to the people of Israel**, bestowing a legal and cultic order (**both are inseparable**) on this people ... [p645]

The Torah of the Messiah is Jesus the Messiah himself. ... [T]he covenant of Sinai has indeed been surpassed ... [p647]

– [The New Covenant: A Theology of Covenant in the New Testament, Communio, Winter 1995](#)

Church Fathers

Some of the Church Fathers were cited above; to this is worth adding St Augustine of Hippo (h/t Robert Sungenis for sending me in this direction), St John Chrysostom, and St Thomas Aquinas:

St Augustine:

Although, therefore, the apostle seems to reprove and correct those who were being persuaded to be circumcised, in such terms as to designate by the word “law” circumcision itself and other similar legal observances, **which are now rejected as shadows of a future substance** by Christians who yet hold what those shadows figuratively promised; he at the same time nevertheless would have it to be clearly understood that the law, by which he says no man is justified, lies not merely in those sacramental institutions which contained promissory figures, but also in those works by which whosoever has done them lives holily, and among which occurs this prohibition: “You shall not covet.” Now, to make our statement all the clearer, let us look at the Decalogue itself. **It is certain, then, that Moses on the mount received the law, that he might deliver it to the people, written on tables of stone by the finger of God.** It is summed up in these ten commandments, in which there is no precept about circumcision, nor anything concerning those animal sacrifices which have ceased to be offered by Christians. Well, now, I should like to be told what there is in these ten commandments, except the observance of the Sabbath, which ought not to be kept by a Christian – whether it prohibit the making and worshipping of idols and of any other gods than the one true God, or the taking of God’s name in vain; or prescribe honour to parents; or give warning against fornication, murder, theft, false witness, adultery, or coveting other men’s property? Which of these commandments would any one say that the Christian ought not to keep? **Is it possible to contend that it is not the law which was written on those two tables that the apostle describes as “the letter that kills,” but the law of circumcision and the other sacred rites which are now abolished?** But then how can we think so, when in the law occurs this precept, “You shall not covet,” by which very commandment, notwithstanding its being holy, just, and good, “sin,” says the apostle, “deceived me, and by it slew me?” **What else can this be than “the letter” that “kills”?**

– [On the Spirit and the Letter, ch 23](#)

St Augustine shows that the 10 Commandments are included in the letter of the law that kills. He

then asks which of the 10 Commandments should not be kept, and if it could be that only the laws on circumcision and sacred rites were abolished? He then says that this is unreasonable, because St Paul includes the Decalogue in his analysis.

St Augustine goes on to show that St Paul definitely includes the Decalogue:

In the passage where he speaks to the Corinthians about the letter that kills, and the spirit that gives life, he expresses himself more clearly, but **he does not mean even there any other “letter” to be understood than the Decalogue itself**, which was written on the two tables. For these are His words: Forasmuch as you are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who has made us fit, as ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance, which was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more shall the ministration of righteousness abound in glory. (2 Corinthians 3:3-9) A good deal might be said about these words; but perhaps we shall have a more fitting opportunity at some future time. At present, however, **I beg you to observe how he speaks of the letter that kills, and contrasts therewith the spirit that gives life.** Now this must certainly be “the ministration of death written and engraven in stones,” and “the ministration of condemnation,” since the law entered that sin might abound. (Romans 5:20) But the commandments themselves are so useful and salutary to the doer of them, that no one could have life unless he kept them. Well, then, **is it owing to the one precept about the Sabbath day, which is included in it, that the Decalogue is called “the letter that kills?”** Because, forsooth, every man that still observes that day in its literal appointment is carnally wise, but to be carnally wise is nothing else than death? And **must the other nine commandments, which are rightly observed in their literal form, not be regarded as belonging to the law** of works by which none is justified, but to the law of faith whereby the just man lives? **Who can possibly entertain so absurd an opinion as to suppose that “the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones,” is not said equally of all the ten commandments, but only of the solitary one touching the Sabbath day?** In which class do we place that which is thus spoken of: “The law works wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression?” (Romans 4:15) and again thus: “Until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law?” (Romans 5:13) and also that which we have already so often quoted: “By the law is the knowledge of sin?” (Romans 3:20) and especially the passage in which the apostle has more clearly expressed the question of which we are treating: “I had not known lust, except the law had said, You shall not covet?” (Romans 7:7)

– [On the Spirit and the Letter, ch 24](#)

St Augustine asks if 9 of the 10 Commandments (other than the sabbath commandment) are excluded from St Paul’s assessment, and then concludes that this would be absurd. Clearly he is saying that the entire law is abolished, not just the ceremonial law.

There it was on tables of stone that the finger of God operated; here it was on the hearts of men. There the law was given outwardly, so that the unrighteous might be terrified; here it was given inwardly, so that they might be justified. (Acts 2:1-47) For this, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not covet; and if there be any other commandment,” – such, of course, as was written on those tables – “it is briefly comprehended,” says he, “in this saying, namely, You shall love your neighbour as yourself. Love works no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” (Romans 13:9-10) Now this was not written on the tables of stone, but “is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.” (Romans 5:5) **God’s law, therefore, is love.** “To it the carnal mind is not subject, neither indeed can be;” (Romans 8:7) but when the works of love are written on tables to alarm the carnal mind, there arises the law of works and “the letter which kills” the transgressor; but when love itself is shed abroad in the hearts of believers, then we have the law of faith, and the spirit which gives life to him that loves.

– [On the Spirit and the Letter, ch 29](#)

St Augustine compares the past – the law written on stone – with the Christian law – written on our hearts, and says God’s law is love, and that love is written on our hearts.

He continues:

As then the law of works, which was written on the tables of stone, and its reward, the land of promise, which the house of the carnal Israel after their liberation from Egypt received, **belonged to the old testament**, so the law of faith, written on the heart, and its reward, the beatific vision which the house of the spiritual Israel, when delivered from the present world, shall perceive, belong to the new testament.

– [On the Spirit and the Letter, ch 41](#)

St Augustine shows that the law written on tables of stone belongs to the Old Covenant (“*testament*” and “*covenant*” are synonyms here).

He goes on:

I beg of you, however, carefully to observe, as far as you can, what I am endeavouring to prove with so much effort. **When the prophet promised a new covenant**, not according to the covenant which had been formerly made with the people of Israel when liberated from Egypt, **he said nothing about a change in the sacrifices or any sacred ordinances**, although such change, too, was without doubt to follow, as we see in fact that it did follow, even as the same prophetic scripture testifies in many other passages; but **he simply called attention to this difference, that God would impress His laws on the mind of those who belonged to this covenant, and would write them in their hearts**, Jeremiah 31:32-33 whence the apostle drew his conclusion–“not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart;” (2 Corinthians 3:3) ... By the law of works, then, the Lord says, “You shall not covet:” Exodus 20:17 but by the law of faith He says, “Without me you can do nothing;” John 15:5 for He was treating of good works, even the fruit of the vine-branches. It is therefore apparent what difference there is between the old covenant and the new – that in the former the law is written on tables, while in the latter on hearts.

– [On the Spirit and the Letter, ch 42](#)

St Augustine explains that the prophecies of the New Covenant said nothing about changes being limited to sacrifices and sacred rites – and so St Paul explicitly includes the Decalogue in his explanation of the abolished law of works.

He shows that the law we are under is not the Old Covenant law, and he shows that the Old Covenant law we are not under includes the 10 Commandments. He does not, however, deny that Christians are not expected to follow a moral law, but he clearly shows that it is both different to and greater than the Decalogue.

St John Chrysostom:

St John Chrysostom, in his homily on 2 Corinthians 3:7-18:

He said that the **tables of Moses were of stone** ... Now by “ministration of death” he means the Law. ... “For if that which passes away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory.” For the one ceased, but the other abides continually. ... For if it be brought to an end by Christ, as in truth it is brought to an end, and this the Law said by anticipation, **how will they who receive not Christ that has done away the Law, be able to see that the Law is done away?**

– [Homily 7 on Second Corinthians](#)

The tables of Moses were the law, the “*ministration of death*” – and the Law is done away!

In his Homily on Romans, he includes murder, adultery, and coveting in his definition of the Law, explaining that it was the law given to Moses, and then goes on to say, re Romans 6:12:

Yet surely Paul’s object everywhere is to annul this Law ...

– [Homily on Romans 6:12](#)

St John Chrysostom makes another very interest point, although not directly addressing this issue: 9 of the 10 Commandments were part of natural law, known to man before the 10 Commandments, and therefore not in need of any explanation. The sabbath commandment was not like this – it needed to be revealed, and that is why it did not remain binding when the Mosaic Law came to an end – it was not part of natural law.

It is, that when God formed man, he implanted within him from the beginning a natural law. And **what then was this natural law?** He gave **utterance to conscience within us**; and made the knowledge of good things, and of those which are the contrary, **to be self-taught**. For we have no need to learn that fornication is an evil thing, and that chastity is a good thing, but we know this from the first. And that you may learn that we know this from the first, the Lawgiver, when He afterwards gave laws, and said, “You shall not kill,” Exodus 20:13 **did not add, “since murder is an evil thing,”** but simply said, “You shall not kill;” for He merely prohibited the sin, without teaching. How was it then when He said, “You shall not kill,” that He did not add, “because murder is a wicked thing.” The reason was, that **conscience had taught this beforehand**; and He speaks thus, as to those who know and understand the point. Wherefore when **He speaks to us of another commandment, not known to us by the dictate of consciences** He not only prohibits, but adds the reason. When, for instance, He gave

commandment respecting the Sabbath; “On the seventh day you shall do no work;” **He subjoined also the reason for this cessation.** What was this? “Because on the seventh day God rested from all His works which He had begun to make.” (Exodus 20:10) And again; “Because thou were a servant in the land of Egypt.” (Deuteronomy 21:18) **For what purpose then I ask did He add a reason respecting the Sabbath, but did no such thing in regard to murder? Because this commandment was not one of the leading ones. It was not one of those which were accurately defined of our conscience, but a kind of partial and temporary one; and for this reason it was abolished afterwards.** But those which are necessary and uphold our life, are the following; “You shall not kill; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal.” On this account then He adds no reason in this case, nor enters into any instruction on the matter, but is content with the bare prohibition.

– [Homilies on the Statutes 12:9](#)

St Thomas Aquinas:

St Thomas Aquinas was one of the leading Catholic theologians ever. Not technically a Church Father, but his theology, like St Augustine’s, has formed an important basis for Catholic theological study. It is from him that the popular use of the term “*Old Law*” comes, and this must be kept in mind when reading later documents heavily influenced by his theology.

St Thomas states that the Old Law included the moral law:

I answer that he is speaking here about keeping the commandments of the Law insofar as **the Law consists of ceremonial precepts and moral precepts.**

– [Commentary on Galatians 3:12](#)

St Thomas is explicit as to whether the contents of the Old Law include the Decalogue:

The Old Law contained some moral precepts; as is evident from **Exodus 20:13-15: “Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal.”** This was reasonable: because, just as the principal intention of human law is to created friendship between man and man; so the chief intention of the Divine law is to establish man in friendship with God. Now since likeness is the reason of love, according to Sirach 13:19: “Every beast loveth its like”; there cannot possibly be any friendship of man to God, Who is supremely good, unless man become good: wherefore it is written (Leviticus 19:2; 11:45): “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” But the goodness of man is virtue, which “makes its possessor good” (Ethic. ii, 6). Therefore it was necessary for **the Old Law to include precepts about acts of virtue: and these are the moral precepts of the Law.**

– [Summa Theologica, Ia.IIae.99.2](#)

The Old Law’s moral precepts included the 10 Commandments:

On the contrary, It is written (Deuteronomy 4:13-14): “Ten words ... He wrote in two tables of stone; and He commanded me at that time that I should teach you the ceremonies and judgments which you shall do.” **But the ten commandments of the Law are moral precepts.** Therefore besides the moral precepts there are others which are ceremonial.

– [Summa Theologica, Ia.IIae.99.3](#)

The New Law also has moral precepts:

Accordingly the New Law had no other external works to determine, by prescribing or forbidding, except the sacraments, and those moral precepts which have a necessary connection with virtue, for instance, that one must not kill, or steal, and so forth.

– [Summa Ia.IIae.108.1](#)

The New Law is the law of the New Covenant (“*Testament*” and “*Covenant*” are synonyms here):

The New Law is the law of the New Testament. But the law of the New Testament is instilled in our hearts. For the Apostle, quoting the authority of Jeremias 31:31,33:

“Behold the days shall come, saith the Lord; and I will perfect unto the house of Israel, and unto the house of Judah, a new testament,” says, explaining what this statement is (Hebrews 8:8,10): “For this is the testament which I will make to the house of Israel . . . by giving [Vulg.: ‘I will give’] My laws into their mind, and in their heart will I write them.” **Therefore the New Law is instilled in our hearts.**

– [Summa Ia.IIae.106.1](#)

The Old Law has been replaced by the New Law:

The state of the world may change in two ways. In one way, according to a change of law: and thus no other state will succeed this state of the New Law. Because **the state of the New Law succeeded the state of the Old Law, as a more perfect law a less perfect one.** Now no state of the present life can be more perfect than the state of the New Law: since nothing can approach nearer to the last end than that which is the immediate cause of our being brought to the last end.

– [Summa Ia.IIae.106.4](#)

The Old Law replaced, and the similarities and differences between the Old Law and New Law:

We must therefore say that, according to the first way, the New Law is not distinct from the Old Law: because they both have the same end, namely, man’s subjection to God; and there is but one God of the New and of the Old Testament, according to Romans 3:30: “It is one God that justifieth circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.” According to the second way, **the New Law is distinct from the Old Law: because the Old Law is like a pedagogue of children,** as the Apostle says (Galatians 3:24), whereas the New Law is the law of perfection, since it is the law of charity, of which the Apostle says (Colossians 3:14) that it is “the bond of perfection.”

– [Summa Ia.IIae.107.7](#)

That the Old Law has been set aside:

Those works of God endure for ever which God so made that they would endure for ever; and these are His perfect works. But **the Old Law was set aside** when there came the perfection of grace; not as though it were evil, but as being weak and useless for this time; because, as the Apostle goes on to say, “the law brought nothing to perfection”: hence he says (Galatians 3:25): “After the faith is come, we are no longer under a pedagogue.”

– [Summa Ia.IIae.98.2](#)

That the moral precepts of the Old Law are to be observed, not because they are the Old Law, but because they are part of the natural law, and therefore part of the New Law:

The Old Law showed forth the precepts of the natural law, and added certain precepts of its own.

– [Summa Ia.IIae.98.5](#)

From the above we can see that the Catholic Church teaches that the 10 Commandments are valid in precept, in their fundamental or primordial content, but not as a legal code. The Old Law is not binding on Christians, yet the 10 Commandments form part of the Old Law.

Official Magisterial statements

The Catechism of the Catholic Church:

Since they express man's fundamental duties towards God and towards his neighbor, the Ten Commandments reveal, in their **primordial content**, grave obligations. They are **fundamentally** immutable, and they oblige always and everywhere. No one can dispense from them. The Ten Commandments are engraved by God in the human heart.

– [Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 2072](#)

The 10 Commandments reveal grave obligations. They are not themselves grave obligations.

They reveal these obligations – in their primordial content. Their primordial content is natural law – it is because they are part of natural law that a) they are obligations, and b) they could be written into the Decalogue for those who did not read it in their hearts.

Their non-primordial (ethnic: see Joseph Ratzinger, above) content, e.g. the need for “*thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates*” to rest, and coveting neighbours’ oxen and donkeys, is not relevant to non-Israelites. Even the mention of Creation and the Exodus are replaced, for Christians, with the New Creation and the redemption from sin.

The 10 Commandments are fundamentally immutable – they are immutable at their most basic level, in their primordial content, because they are part of natural law.

The Council of Trent:

If any one saith, that nothing besides faith is commanded in the Gospel; that other things are indifferent, neither commanded nor prohibited, but free; or, that the ten commandments **nowise** appertain to Christians; let him be anathema.

– [Council of Trent, Decree on Justification, Canon 19](#)

It is wrong to say that the 10 Commandments “*nowise appertain*” to Christians. In modern English, “*nowise*” means “*in no way*”. We already know that the 10 Commandments DO apply to Christians because their principles are part of natural law and the New Law. So this is not contrary to what I have been saying, and have found support for in the writings of the Church Fathers, modern Catholic apologists, and the official Catholic magisterium.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church:

The Law of the Gospel “**fulfils,**” **refines, surpasses,** and leads the Old Law to its perfection. In the Beatitudes, the New Law fulfils the divine promises by elevating and orienting them toward the “kingdom of heaven.” It is addressed to those open to accepting this new hope with faith – the poor, the humble, the afflicted, the pure of heart, those persecuted on account of Christ and so marks out the surprising ways of the Kingdom.

– [Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 1967](#)

The Pontifical Biblical Commission:

As regards the central contents of **the Law (the Decalogue and that which is in accordance with its spirit)**, Ga 5:18-23 affirms first of all: “If you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the Law” (5:18). **Having no need of the Law**, a person will spontaneously abstain from “works of the flesh” (5:19-21) and will produce “the fruit of the Spirit” (5:22).

– [The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible, section 45, Pontifical Biblical Commission, 2001](#)

Mystici Corporis Christi, 29-30, Pope Pius XII:

And first of all, by the death of our Redeemer, **the New Testament took the place of the Old Law which had been abolished** ... “To such an extent, then,” says St. Leo the Great, speaking of the Cross of our Lord, “was there effected a transfer from the Law to the Gospel, from the Synagogue to the Church, from the many sacrifices to one Victim, that, as Our Lord expired, that mystical veil which shut off the innermost part of the temple and its sacred secret was rent violently from top to bottom.”

On the Cross then the Old Law died, soon to be buried and to be a bearer of death, in order to give way to the New Testament ...

– [Mystici Corporis Christi, 29-30](#)

Pope Pius XII uses St Thomas Aquinas’ term “*Old Law*”.

The Catechism of the Council of Trent:

With regard to the exposition of this Commandment, the faithful are carefully to be taught how it agrees with, and how it differs from the others, in order that they may understand why we observe and keep holy not Saturday but Sunday.

The point of difference is evident. The other Commandments of the Decalogue are **precepts of the natural law**, obligatory at all times and unalterable. Hence, after the **abrogation of the Law of Moses**, all the Commandments contained in the two tables are observed by Christians, **not indeed because their observance is commanded by Moses, but because they are in conformity with nature** which dictates obedience to them.

– [Catechism of the Council of Trent](#)

The other commandments are precepts of natural law, and that is why Christians need to observe

them. The Law of Moses was abrogated – in the context of the 10 Commandments, clearly the term includes them. We do not observe the 10 Commandments because their observance was commanded by Moses. We observe them because they are part of natural law.

The Catechism of the Council of Trent again:

But, lest the people, aware of **the abrogation of the Mosaic Law**, may imagine that the precepts of the Decalogue are no longer obligatory, it should be taught that when God gave the Law to Moses, He did not so much **establish a new code**, as render more luminous that divine light by which the depraved morals and long-continued perversity of man had at that time almost obscured. It is most certain that **we are not bound to obey the Commandments because they were delivered by Moses, but because they are implanted in the hearts of all, and have been explained and confirmed by Christ our Lord.**

– [Catechism of the Council of Trent](#)

When God gave Moses the Law, he established a new code, but more importantly, he shone a light on natural law that people had forgotten. (See CCC 1962 below.) We are bound to obey the 10 Commandments because natural law has been written onto our hearts, NOT because they were given to Moses. Our obligations to obey these principles existed before and after the time during which the Old Law was legally in force.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church:

The Old Law is the first stage of revealed Law. Its **moral prescriptions** are summed up in the Ten Commandments. The **precepts of the Decalogue** lay the foundations for the vocation of man fashioned in the image of God; they prohibit what is contrary to the love of God and neighbor and prescribe what is essential to it. The Decalogue is a light offered to the conscience of every man to make God's call and ways known to him and to protect him against evil: God wrote on the tables of the Law what men did not read in their hearts.

– [Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 1962](#)

The precepts of the Decalogue ... that doesn't mean the Decalogue itself. The principles underlying the 10 Commandments are part of natural law, written on our hearts. The Decalogue was given because men did not read in their hearts what was written there.

Conclusion

In the three part series that came before this, we have seen from the Bible that the sabbath is part of the Old Covenant Law, and that the 10 Commandments are part of the Old Covenant Law, which has been abolished. St Paul explicitly includes the 10 Commandments, written on tables of stone, in his thesis. Adventists, for some reason, have failed to comprehend that the 10 Commandments are part of a law no longer legally in force, and they fail to understand how we can be under a better law.

The Old Law, as a whole, was binding on Israel, but never anyone else, not even the Gentiles they lived alongside. The moral components of that law, however, were binding on all, even before the

10 Commandments were given, because they were part of the natural law anyone could grasp.

I have given plenty of evidence that the Catholic Church does not deny this, and in fact it is easy to support from Catholic statements on other matters. The more common Catholic statements promoting the 10 Commandments are part of a fight against moral relativism rather than a technical appraisal of the status of a legal code. In discussions about the technical aspects of the Old Covenant, it becomes clear that the 10 Commandments, in their fundamental content, are binding on Christians, even though the 10 Commandments as a legal code are not the law in force today for Christians. The New Law has been written on our hearts, and there is no evidence that the 7th day sabbath was included in what was written there.

Further reading:

- [Why We Are Not Bound by Everything in the Old Law](#) ... Catholic Answers
- [7 Reasons to reject Sabbatarianism \(Seventh Day Sabbath Keeping\)](#) ... by Nick
- [The New Covenant: A Theology of Covenant in the New Testament](#) ... Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Communio, Winter 1995
- [Sabbath and the First Day – Why do Catholics worship on Sunday instead of Saturday?](#) ... By John Hellman
- [Dies Domini: Is Saturday the True Sabbath?](#) ... by Jacob Michael
- [Sabbath or Sunday? – The Church Fathers](#) ... Catholic Answers
- [The Covenant With Israel](#) ... by Avery Cardinal Dulles
- [On the Spirit and the Letter](#) ... by St Augustine of Hippo
- [Paul and the Law](#) ... by Jimmy Akin

Chapter 40: Is the sabbath moral or ceremonial law?

Is the sabbath moral law (still in effect) or ceremonial law (done away with)? ... and related topics ...

Seventh-day Adventists teach that the moral law laid down by God through Moses is still intact today, and must be kept (though they usually, unlike their founder Ellen White, do admit that salvation does not come through the keeping of these commandments by our own ability.) They also teach that the ceremonial laws laid down by God through Moses are no longer in effect today – we need no longer observe ritual purification like the ancient Israelites did, nor need we sacrifice lambs at Passover.

However, they teach that the sabbath, because it is part of the Ten Commandments, is part of the moral law, and not part of the ceremonial law. Are they right? I had a debate on IRC with several Adventists defending their views, and managed to get nothing out of them except the claim that the sabbath was moral law because it was part of the 10 Commandments. But they were totally unable to explain WHY.

This essay is adapted from a later e-mail to an Adventist who was part of that debate.

I still don't understand why the sabbath has to be a "*moral*" law. There were plenty of moral laws given in the Old Testament that were not part of the Decalogue. Not all of the moral law was listed in the Decalogue, and the Decalogue did not consist only of moral law.

If you look at the difference between moral and ceremonial aspects of the law, the moral part is the part in our hearts, our love for neighbour or for God. The ceremonial part is the part outside of that, the ritual part, the externals.

Similarly, the love between man and wife is the moral part, and adultery does away with the love between them, because the love and trust have been betrayed. Thus the adultery commandment is part of the moral law.

Also, the ritual sacrifice of the Passover was a moral law. The worship and love and thanks expressed for God for bringing them out of Egypt was a moral issue. But the ceremonial aspects of that law, i.e. the precise timing, and the need for a sacrifice, could be done away under the new covenant.

Let's take a closer look at the Passover aspect. What is the moral part? What is the ceremonial part? The moral part, as I said above is the love and worship of God around the theme of the Passover. The ceremonial part is the ritual and timing of the event. Similarly the moral aspect of the sabbath is the love and worship of God around the theme of the sabbath, the New Creation we become in Christ because of the new covenant he made with us. The ceremonial aspect of the sabbath law, like the Passover law, is the ritual and timing of it. Just like the moral aspects of the Passover must be kept by us today, so with the sabbath. Just like the timing aspects of the Passover are irrelevant to us today, so too with the timing aspects of the sabbath. There is no reason that the timing regulation of

one feast should be ceremonial law, and of the other feast moral law. The spiritual side is moral, the physical side is done away with – in both instances. So by seeing that there was a moral side to the Passover, and to the rest of the Holy Days commanded by the Jews, yet that could not be done away with, so we see that to each of these feasts, the sabbath too, have a ceremonial aspect, one which the Apostles and the early Christians did do away with.

And it is the same with the sabbath. The moral part is the love we have for God, and the worship we give to him, and the trust we place in him. Sure, God will bless you for doing that on Saturday, but that doesn't mean that the precise timing of your love and worship makes it any more special to God. He commanded us to worship him on the sabbath (actually he didn't but for the sake of this essay I will not argue that) ... the moral part of that commandment was to worship and love god. The ceremonial part was the timing and so on.

If you disagree, please then explain to me why the precise timing of the sabbath was part of the moral law. I can accept that the worship and love of God was, because God is a moral being, but I cannot understand why the precise timing is part of any moral plan of God. That's the first thing I need to further my understanding of this sabbath/moral law issue.

Where in the Bible does it say that the 10 Commandments are the moral law, or is that something the Seventh-day Adventist church, i.e. mere men, says? If you can show me that the BIBLE says that the 10 Commandments are moral law, then I'll definitely have to reconsider my views.

A similar topic is circumcision. The sabbath was a covenant between God and His people Israel, exactly like circumcision. It was a sign of that love between us and God, just like circumcision was. It was a sign that we are obedient to God, also just like circumcision. Unless you can tell me why the precise timing of the sabbath is a moral law and not merely ceremonial, I'll have to conclude that both the sabbath and circumcision are both moral laws, and also both ceremonial laws. (Note to readers: the Seventh-day Adventist church teaches officially that the sabbath is moral law, while circumcision is ceremonial law, without having a scrap of evidence from the Bible to teach this!)

The moral and ceremonial parts of the sabbath I've already explained. The moral side of circumcision was the covenant God made with Israel, which continued over into the Church – the Spiritual Israel (as Paul said when he said that we are now circumcised in our hearts.) Circumcision's moral aspects still apply to us Christians today – no-one has ever done them away, and they are mentioned as a positive thing in the New Testament. So, even though circumcision was a sign of God's true people, the ceremonial aspects of it have been done away, and true circumcision is now in our hearts. Similarly, even though the sabbath was a sign of God's covenant with his people, the ceremonial aspects have been done away, and the true sabbath is in our hearts. Today there is no legalistic sabbath any more, only the sabbath's worship of our hearts.

Another point brought up in the IRC chat and not answered by any SDA was that the sabbath was a sign between God and Israel, NOT between God and humanity. Ex 31:16-17 says that it's a covenant between God and ISRAEL. So the ceremonial sabbath applied to Israel, not humanity. Since Christianity goes out to the whole world today, the ceremonial aspects of circumcision and

the sabbath do not apply to everyone, but the moral aspects do – the internal love and worship of God and neighbour that was taught by Jesus. Finally, I'd like to deal with the issue of the earliest historical record for Sunday usage. Please note the dates for these writings – AD 70, 74, 107, 150.

The Didache... *(This was the “Teaching of the Apostles”. Therefore it was they who first began Sunday worship... “But every Lord’s day... gather yourselves together and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one that is at variance with his fellow come together with you, until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be profaned.”*
– Didache 14 AD 70.

The Letter of Barnabas... *“We keep the eighth day -Sunday – with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose again from the dead.”*
– Letter of Barnabas 15:6-8, 74 AD (though some say it was about 150 AD)]

Ignatius of Antioch... *“Those who were brought up in the ancient order of things [i.e. Jews] have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord’s day, on which also our life has sprung up again by him and by his death.”*
– Letter to the Magnesians 9. 107 AD

Justin Martyr... (100-165 AD) *“We too would observe the fleshly circumcision, and the sabbaths, and in short all the feasts, if we did not know for what reason they were enjoined on you, namely, on account of your transgressions and the hardness of your heart... How is it, Trypho, that we would not observe those rites which do not harm us, I speak of fleshly circumcision and sabbaths and feasts?... God enjoined you to keep the sabbath, and impose on you other precepts for a sign, as I have already said, on account of your unrighteousness and that of your fathers.”*
– Dialogue with Trypho the Jew 18, 21, 150 AD

Justin Martyr... *“We all gather on the day of the sun, for it is the first day – after the Jewish Sabbath, but also the first day of the week – when GOD, separating matter from darkness, made the world; and on this same day, Jesus Christ our Savior, rose from the dead.”*
– 1st Apology, 67.

That’s sufficient to show that Sunday was kept by the early Christians. Other early historians show that there were lots who did this. Surely the Apostle John would have mentioned something about it, since he was still alive at that point? He would have written some letters? He certainly would not have used the term “*Lord’s Day*” in an ambiguous context if he knew anything about the general usage of the term, yes, even way back then, as a term for Sunday. The fact is, just as the term “*Preparation Day*” was a Jewish term meaning specifically the 5th day of the week (i.e. in preparation for the sabbath), “*Lord’s Day*” was a first century term used to mean the 1st day of the week.

There are NO – zero, zilch, none – references to the sabbath as “*Lord’s Day*” ever recorded in any text ever, until the Seventh-day Adventist church came along and invented a new definition for the term.

So, in summary, no Seventh-day Adventist has EVER given me a good reason for their belief that the sabbath is part of the moral law of God. They have never explained the difference between the ritual of the sabbath and the ritual of circumcision. They have failed to explain why the sabbath is a sign between God and humanity, when the Bible clearly says it was a sign between God and Israel. And they have failed to show that the sabbath to Sunday change was “invented” when Constantine decreed Sunday observance in 321 AD.

Postscript – a year after being placed on the net: Up till now, no-one has come forward with a reason why the sabbath is a moral law, and not just a ceremonial law. Is it because Adventists have no logical reason for believing this? However, one astute student of the Scriptures provided me with the following excellent point:

“The commandments against murder, adultery and lying, for instance are always in effect; that is, they can be considered “moral” laws. The fourth commandment (and it’s prohibitions) were not to be followed on the other six days. In effect, they cannot be considered “moral laws” since what cannot be done on sabbath can be done on the other days of the week. In other words, a moral law MUST be fully in effect AT ALL TIMES – ALL DAYS – for it to be moral. At best, the sabbath laws and restrictions were valid for only a 24 hour period. Certainly not continually moral in the sense of the other commandments.”

Chapter 41: Rome's challenge to Adventists – prove what you say! aka Constantine, the Papacy, and the real origins of Sunday

This is an e-mail I wrote in response to a request for commentary got from Robert Sanders, who has a ministry for Adventists at his website [Truth or Fables](#) – his words are indented, my reply is in black.

Thanks for offering me the chance to explain how we Catholics feel about the sabbath / Sunday “change.”

If I understand the Catholic position correctly, they say the Pope did not change the Seventh Day Sabbath to Sunday. They contend this was done by the Apostolic Church and there is no record of a “Pope” making the change, but it was done on authority of the Catholic Church.

Yes, that is pretty much the Catholic position summed up. We do, however, also hold to the idea that Sunday observance is biblical, and the origins are referenced in the New Testament (texts like Heb 4, Col 2, Rom 14, Gal 4, Acts 20, 1 Cor 16 and others.)

One must just be careful in defining one’s terms.

One person might say, “The Catholic Church changed the sabbath” and another might say, “The Apostles changed the sabbath” and depending on their background, they might mean the same thing, or they might be disagreeing with each other.

Some terms, as used by Catholicism in general, of interest:

- Catholic Church – this refers to the Church as begun by Christ and led by the Apostles after Pentecost
- Apostolic Church – this is a synonym for the Catholic Church during the time when the Apostles were alive
- post-Apostolic Church – the Catholic Church once the last Apostle had died
- papacy – the office of Peter instituted in Matt 16:18, and continued in his successors
- pope – the occupant of the papacy, beginning with Peter in the first century

I do not expect you to AGREE with these terms or accept the theology we Catholics accept. All I ask is that when you read Catholic texts written by Catholics, you TRY to understand what we are saying, instead of applying YOUR definitions for these words to something WE have written.

For instance, if a Catholic said, “*SUNDAY IS A CATHOLIC INSTITUTION*” (quotes from the original e-mail I am responding to) then this needs to be understood using Catholic definitions, in order to know what the Catholic means and understands. He is, therefore, NOT saying that Sunday observance began in 300 AD or 600 AD or whenever it might be that a Protestant feels the “Roman

Catholic Church” (incorrect name, in fact) came into existence. What the Catholic is actually saying with “*SUNDAY IS A CATHOLIC INSTITUTION*” is that Sunday observance is something that came from the Catholic Church – without specifying era – and he would, in good conscience, say EXACTLY the same of the decision in Acts 15 about circumcision – he would claim that THAT TOO was a “*Catholic institution*” because that IS how he sees the early Christian Church – as Catholic.

What often happens, then, is that Catholics claim authorship to Sunday observance because they believe the Apostles began Sunday observance and they view the Apostles as the first Catholic leaders, but when Adventists hear these words, they grab them and remove their context and actual meaning, and make it seem as if the Catholic Church is claiming that Sunday observance was begun by a group which the Adventists define as the Catholic Church, and NOT the Apostolic Church.

That said, I must differentiate between THREE types of texts that can be used as evidence.

1. Type 1 – Statements by Catholics that a) agree with Catholic teaching but b) are not official sources of Catholic teaching
2. Type 2 – Statements by Catholics that disagree with Catholic teaching
3. Type 3 – Statements that constitute official Catholic teaching

I have almost NEVER seen Adventists quote official Catholic teaching on the issue of the sabbath. (Simply because it would destroy what they want people to believe we teach.) On the rare occasion, one will quote the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and even more rarely, they will quote it in context. Virtually ALL of the quotes they offer to support their view, are quotes of **type 2** (not real Catholic teaching) or **type 1** quotes where context and the author’s intent have been abused.

Examples of texts of **type 3** (official Catholic teaching) include:

- the Bible (Catholics DO view the Bible as an official source of truth)
- the Catechism of the Catholic Church
- papal encyclicals
- Council documents (e.g. from the Council of Nicaea, or the Council of Trent) – these include catechisms, decrees, canons, letters, etc. produced by the council in question
- other official Vatican documents intended to convey or explain Catholic teaching

Examples of texts of **type 1** (agree with Catholic teaching but the text itself is not authoritative) include:

- ALL Catholic newspapers
- ALL Catholic periodicals not published by the Vatican (and most which are, e.g. their tax report)
- books with “Imprimatur” printed in front (this is only permission to print, and says nothing about accuracy of content)

- books with “Nihil obstat” printed in front (this means that the book is considered to be faithful to Catholic teaching by the local bishop, NOT that the book is an official source of Catholic doctrine)
- many books whose titles contain the word “Catechism”
- my website (hopefully)

Examples of **type 2** texts, which disagree with Catholic teaching, include:

- the abundant quotes referenced from the Catholic Mirror newspaper
- other similar texts

Note: I have, on record, Adventist pastors who tell me that the Bible contains errors, that a lot of what Paul said we need not obey, that it was merely opinion. I have Adventist pastors who have told me that Ellen White is indeed infallible and has not erred, that she was inspired by God and that her writings CAN RIGHTLY be used to interpret difficult passages in the Bible (and by logical extension, faulty ones if the Bible contains error.) Do THESE quotes constitute “*official Adventist teaching*” just because they come from the mouth of an Adventist pastor? I doubt it. These statements would fall into the type 2 category I described above. By taking type 1 and type 2 statements and removing context, a strong straw-man case can be made for the opposing position – as long as the reader is kept ignorant of the true nature of these texts, and never shown any type 3 (official) texts which show authentic teaching of the respective denomination. I will send, just after this, a case study I have put together on this, which will hopefully demonstrate the error in the pseudo-Catholic propaganda that many Sabbatarians spread.

For a full view of Catholic teaching on the origins of the observance of Sunday, and the removal of the sabbath observance, I recommend you read the papal encyclical *Dies Domini*, written by Pope John Paul II.

If this is true, then Ellen White is wrong in saying it was changed by “THE POPE.”

Ellen White would have defined the term “the pope” differently to Catholics – she would likely have meant someone other than the Apostle Peter, someone who lived much later in Christian history. She should name him, and she does not.

It is interesting that the SDA Church cannot put a name on the Pope that made the change.

That IS interesting. Certainly it shows that they are prepared to make claims, but can’t give details when the claims are questioned by informed questioners.

Chapter 42: Pope Sylvester I – who changed the sabbath?

This is a follow-up to the chapter entitled Constantine, the Papacy, and the real origins of Sunday. There is a follow-up post to follow.

Michael Scheifler has a rebuttal on his website to something I wrote. He claims that the pope who changed the sabbath to Sunday was Pope Sylvester I.

In light of the teachings of Ellen White, and in light of history – as taught by real historians – this cannot be seen as more than a failed attempt to make the argument seem viable. But it is not viable.

From Ellen White:

The 1260 years of papal supremacy began with the establishment of the papacy in A. D. 538, and would therefore terminate on 1798.

– Great Controversy, p266, 1888 edition.

This period, as stated in the preceding chapters, began with the establishment of the papacy, A. D. 538, and terminated in 1798. At that time, when the papacy was abolished and the pope was made captive by the French army, the papal power received its deadly wound, and the prediction was fulfilled, ‘He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity.’

– Great Controversy, p439, 1888 edition

If the papacy was established in 538 AD (Ellen White's words were changed in later editions to cover up that mistake) then Sylvester could not have been a pope.

Samuele Bacchiocchi, a famous Adventist scholar, writes on the origin of Sunday and Ellen White:

What is problematic is the impression many people get from EGW's statements that the Sabbath was observed “by all Christians ... in the first centuries” until “the early part of the fourth century [when] the emperor Constantine issued a decree making Sunday a public holiday.” (pp. 52-53) ... The earliest documents mentioning Sunday worship go back to Barnabas in 135 and Justin Martyr in 150. Thus, it is evident that Sunday worship was already established by the middle of the second century. This means that to be historically accurate the term “centuries” should be changed to the singular “century.”

– End Time Issues, #87

More from Ellen White:

It was on behalf of Sunday that popery first asserted its arrogant claims; and its first resort to the power of the state was to compel the observance of Sunday as ‘the Lord’s Day.’

– Great Controversy, p447

Royal edicts, general councils, and church ordinances sustained by secular power were

the steps by which the pagan festival [day of the Sun] attained its position of honor in the Christian world.

– Great Controversy, p574

And Dr Bacchiocchi's rebuttal:

Both statements just cited are inaccurate, because the secular power of the state did not influence or compel Christians to adopt Sunday during the second and third centuries. At that time the Roman emperors were rather hostile toward Christianity. They were more interested to suppress Christianity than to support church leaders in their promotion of Sunday worship. The bishop of Rome could not have resorted to "the power of the state to compel the observance of Sunday as 'the Lord's Day.'" Eventually, beginning with the fourth century, some Roman emperors actively supported the agenda of the church, but this was long after the establishment of Sunday observance.

– End Time Issues, #87

Bacchiocchi is presenting a more realistic view of the history of Sunday observance than Ellen White did. No modern historian takes the claim that the pope changed the sabbath seriously. The fact is that Sunday was kept by Christians long before Sylvester, long before Constantine.

Ignatius of Antioch, 107 AD: *let every friend of Christ keep the Lord's Day as a festival, the resurrection-day, the queen and chief of all the days of the week.*

– Epistle to the Magnesians, chp 9. Ante-Nicene Fathers , vol. 1, pg. 62-63.

The Epistle of Barnabas, 70-120 AD: *Wherefore we Christians keep the eighth day for joy, on which also Jesus arose from the dead and when he appeared ascended into heaven.*

– The Epistle of Barnabas, section 15, 100 AD, Ante-Nicene Fathers , vol. 1, pg. 147

Justin Martyr, 150 AD: *But Sunday is the day on which we hold our common assembly, because it is the first day of the week and Jesus our saviour on the same day rose from the dead.*

– First apology of Justin, Ch 68

This Pope Sylvester thing is a rather desperate attempt to salvage a claim which should have been abandoned long ago. All it does today is make people laugh at those who suggest it, and when those who believe it realise they have been duped, they will realise that the whole system is based on such misinformation. I didn't think that this is what Adventism wants ... but for some, their traditions seem more important than admitting the facts and moving on to a more productive Christianity.

Chapter 43: More on Sunday and Pope Sylvester I

This is a follow-up to the chapters (41, 42) entitled Constantine, the Papacy, and the real origins of Sunday and Pope Sylvester I – who changed the sabbath?

Michael Schiefler has been trying to squeeze more water out of a stone on his anti-Catholic website. I commented on it before. He seems to think he has the name of the Pope that changed the sabbath to Sunday nailed down – Pope Sylvester I. Scheifler is basing his claims on second-hand information based on what are probably spurious documents. The [Catholic Encyclopedia article on Pope Sylvester](#) says the following:

This was the era of Constantine the Great, when the public position of the Church so greatly improved, a change which must certainly have been very noticeable at Rome; it is consequently to be regretted that there is so little authoritative information concerning Sylvester's pontificate. At an early date legend brings him into close relationship with the first Christian emperor, but in a way that is contrary to historical fact. These legends were introduced especially into the "Vita beati Sylvestri" (Duchesne, loc. cit., Introd., cix sq.) which appeared in the East and has been preserved in Greek, Syriac, and Latin in the "Constitutum Sylvestri"-an apocryphal account of an alleged Roman council which belongs to the Symmachian forgeries and appeared between 501 and 508, and also in the "Donatio Constantini". The accounts given in all these writings concerning the persecution of Sylvester, the healing and baptism of Constantine, the emperor's gift to the pope, the rights granted to the latter, and the council of 275 bishops at Rome, are entirely legendary.

In the article on [Sunday](#):

The Council of Elvira (300) decreed: "If anyone in the city neglects to come to church for three Sundays, let him be excommunicated for a short time so that he may be corrected" (xxi).

So there we have a formal decree on Sunday from prior to Sylvester, although not a Roman or ecumenical council, but it establishes the formal nature of Sunday in the Christian world.

The same article mentions [Tertullian](#):

"We, however (just as tradition has taught us), on the day of the Lord's Resurrection ought to guard not only against kneeling, but every posture and office of solicitude, deferring even our businesses lest we give any place to the devil" ("De orat.", xxiii; cf. "Ad nation.", I, xiii; "Apolog.", xvi).

Tertullian establishes that Sunday was already used for rest in the early 200s.

The [same article](#) says:

A Council of Laodicea, held toward the end of the fourth century, was content to prescribe that on the Lord's Day the faithful were to abstain from work as far as possible. At the beginning of the sixth century St. Caesarius, as we have seen, and

others showed an inclination to apply the law of the Jewish Sabbath to the observance of the Christian Sunday. The Council held at Orleans in 538 reprobated this tendency as Jewish and non-Christian.

So what Laodicea decided was nothing new – it had been going on for ages. And what Rabanus Maurus, a later writer cited by Adventists, reports of Pope Sylvester corresponds with later developments, after some controversy about viewing Sunday in terms of a sabbath, and is in keeping with the time of the forgeries rather than the time of Sylvester.

There isn't even certainty that the council of Laodicea fell within the lifetime of Sylvester ... and Laodicea is also used by Adventists as the decree which changed the sabbath to Sunday. Can they not make up their minds? If they had real evidence, why are they so confused?

Very little is known about what really happened in the reign of Sylvester, and nothing I can find online confirms this Sunday issue, apart from claims like Scheifler's, either based on simple unsupported claims, or on questionable history. (As are the Catholic bulletin clippings that Scheifler presents on his site.)

So Scheifler's info is second hand, and probably based on legend derived from those forgeries, which were made to promote the authority of the pope.

That Sunday was being kept as the Lord's Day is well-established by then – in both the Church Fathers and official gatherings of bishops. That it was used as a day of rest was established in Tertullian's time. That it replaced the sabbath as a sabbath-like concept was not formally accepted for several centuries to come. So did Sylvester do anything new?

If Sylvester DID simply confirm Sunday observance, it is meaningless in light of a well-established practice, as it would be nothing more than a mere mention, the way later councils and popes (such as HH Pope John Paul II) confirmed it. Popes and Councils reiterate things many times, for various reasons, and never are repetitions considered to be an establishment of an idea or a rule. Unless you really need to stretch a point, which is what Scheifler needs to do.

If Scheifler really wants to make his point stick, he'd have to go back in time and film the events or bring back documents for us to look at. More practically, he'd need to quote Sylvester, not other people quoting later forged works, or he'd need to show that the discussion he quotes is not based on forged works ... and he'd also need to show that Sylvester did more than just mention the day the way later popes/councils did, which in no way established the observance of the day as an official practice.

Chapter 44: Adventist misrepresentation of The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles

A quote from the Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, a document from the late 300s AD, is often provided by Adventists to show that Christians kept the sabbath then:

“Thou shalt observe the Sabbath, on account of Him who ceased from His work of creation, but ceased not from His work of providence: it is a rest for meditation of the law, not for idleness of the hands.” “The Anti-Nicene Fathers,” Vol 7,p. 413. From “Constitutions of the Holy Apostles,” a document of the 3rd and 4th Centuries.
– Sabbath Truth (sic) site

What the Adventist teachers won’t easily show you are the following quotes from the same document:

Be not careless of yourselves, neither deprive your Saviour of His own members, neither divide His body nor disperse His members, neither prefer the occasions of this life to the word of God; but assemble yourselves together every day, morning and evening, singing psalms and praying in the Lord’s house: in the morning saying the sixty-second Psalm, and in the evening the hundred and fortieth, but principally on the Sabbath-day. And on the day of our Lord’s resurrection, which is the Lord’s day, meet more diligently, sending praise to God that made the universe by Jesus, and sent Him to us, and condescended to let Him suffer, and raised Him from the dead.
– [book II, section LIX](#)

Do you therefore fast, and ask your petitions of God. We enjoin you to fast every fourth day of the week, and every day of the preparation, and the surplusage of your fast bestow upon the needy; every Sabbath-day excepting one, and every Lord’s day, hold your solemn assemblies, and rejoice: for he will be guilty of sin who fasts on the Lord’s day, being the day of the resurrection, or during the time of Pentecost, or, in general, who is sad on a festival day to the Lord. For on them we ought to rejoice, and not to mourn.
– [book V, section XX](#)

By taking away context, they hide the truth that these were not Sabbath keepers, but Sunday keepers.

At best, Adventists can argue that these were Sunday keepers who had retained the Sabbath as a custom. Today such practices are ignored and such Christians lumped together as Sunday keepers, while such practices seen in the past are, without evidence, assumed to be cases of Jew-like and Adventist-like Saturday legalism.

However, that’s not what the section of the Constitutions that Adventists quote is telling us. The section they quote is about the 10 commandments, and amongst the 10 commandments is the commandment about keeping the sabbath. The document is not instructing Christians to keep the sabbath. It’s citing the 10 commandments. That’s not honest quoting on the part of Adventists.

Chapter 45: Socrates and Sozomen on Christian observance of the sabbath

I've discussed Socrates before, and shown how Adventists have misquoted him to make it appear that most Christians in the 400s AD kept the sabbath, and only Rome and Alexandria didn't. They have a quote from Sozomen that seems to say something similar.

Something didn't register with me with my first readings of the sources Adventists quote, but it's actually quite obvious now that it's clicked in my brain – typical weekends were not being discussed at all. I'll get to that.

Adventists quote selectively to make it look like many Christians assembled on the sabbath, every sabbath. It's clear from the source documents that they fasted on the sabbath, in memory of Jesus being in the tomb – it wasn't a sabbath observance like the Jews and the Adventists have. What I now realise is both Socrates and Sozomen were referring to the Saturdays during Lent – not every Saturday, just those in Lent. Their entire discussion on their respective chapters is about customs during Lent and Holy Week.

There are two well-known quote from Socrates' Ecclesiastical History that Adventists put forward as evidence for 5th century sabbath observance by Christians (one of the quotes is actually from Sozomen, not Socrates). I am sure most Adventists and those who have come across what they teach are familiar with them. I was recently referred to the Sabbath Truth (sic) website, where the argument for the Christian observance of the Sabbath is weak, and where truth is even weaker.

The first quote:

*“The people of Constantinople, and almost everywhere, assemble together on the Sabbath, as well as on the first day of the week, which **custom** is never observed at Rome or at Alexandria.” – Socrates, “Ecclesiastical History,” Book 7, chap.19.*
[This is actually Sozomen, not Socrates]

And this:

“For although almost all churches throughout The World celebrated the sacred mysteries (the Lord's Supper) on the Sabbath of every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, refuse to do this.” – Socrates, “Ecclestical History,” Book 5, chap. 22, p. 289.

This is used to pretend that all Christians, except those at Rome and Alexandria, kept the Sabbath.

But the context is conveniently left out. Here are the source documents that you can read to see the context:

[The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus, book 5, chapter 22](#)

[The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen, book 7, chapter 19](#)

Starting with Socrates:

I quote a broader section, and the limited quote usually given by Adventists is in bold. Important qualifiers are underlined.

*And among various nations there are other usages, for which innumerable reasons are assigned. Since however no one can produce a written command as an authority, it is evident that the apostles left each one to his own free will in the matter, to the end that each might perform what is good not by constraint or necessity. Such is the difference in the churches on the subject of fasts. Nor is there less variation in regard to religious assemblies. **For although almost all churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the sabbath of every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this.** The Egyptians in the neighborhood of Alexandria, and the inhabitants of Thebaïs, hold their religious assemblies on the sabbath, but do not participate of the mysteries in the manner usual among Christians in general: for after having eaten and satisfied themselves with food of all kinds, in the evening making their offerings they partake of the mysteries.*

So the passage is NOT telling us that all the Christians, except those at Rome and Alexandria, kept the Sabbath. It is telling us that the Christians believed that they were free to follow Romans 14:5-6, and worship God in spirit, not bound to a specific day. They chose to continue a custom (even called a custom by Socrates – see the bold underlined section in the first quote of Socrates from Adventists above) that only resembles Jewish/Adventist sabbath observance.

In fact, the part of the longer quote from Socrates, showing context, shows that the difference between the Alexandrians and other Christians is that the Alexandrians and Romans did not observe a Saturday Eucharist along with their Saturday fast! Other Christians did. So it was not a case of observing the Sabbath and not Sunday – it was a case of whether or not they fasted on Saturdays (all Christians except the Egyptians fasted) and whether or not they celebrated the Eucharist on Saturdays (all Christians did except the Alexandrians and Romans) like most Christians.

Christians celebrated the Eucharist every day, and fasted on Fridays and Saturdays. The exceptions were the Egyptians (who didn't fast on Saturdays) and the Alexandrians and Romans (who fasted but didn't celebrate the Eucharist on Saturdays).

And now notice the kicker – chapter 22 is all about Easter and the period of Lent:

As we have touched the subject I deem it not unreasonable to say a few words concerning Easter. ... But that the time of keeping Easter in various places is dependent on usage, I infer from this, that those who agree in faith, differ among themselves on questions of usage. And it will not perhaps be unseasonable to notice here the diversity of customs in the churches. The fasts before Easter will be found to be differently observed among different people. Those at Rome fast three successive weeks before Easter, excepting Saturdays and Sundays. ...

[the part quoted above, the part cited by Adventists, is located here in the text, between the section quoted above and the section quoted below]

... At Alexandria again, on the Wednesday in Passion week and on Good Friday, the scriptures are read ... I have also known of another peculiarity in Thessaly, which is, that they baptize there on the days of Easter only ... The Novatians, as I have stated, were divided among themselves on account of the feast of Easter ...

The entire section is about observances related to Easter. Most Christians celebrate the Eucharist on Holy Saturday but fasted on that day; Egyptian Christians celebrated the Eucharist and did not fast; Roman and Alexandrian Christians fasted and did not celebrate the Eucharist.

You will find many references like this that are used by Adventists to make it seem as if early Christians observed the Sabbath because they believed it was binding on them. But context always proves the Adventist claims wrong. In every case, what is really happening is that Christians continued with customs they inherited from the Jews, but knowing that their only purpose was to give God glory, and they could do that with any day.

I'd conclude that this Sabbath Truth website has not dealt honestly with the evidence. Why not? What does it have to hide? What doesn't it want us to know about the reality of what Saturday meant to the early Christians? Why pretend it meant more than it did?

Let's take a look at Sozomen now. He starts off as Socrates did:

We have now described the various usages that prevailed in the celebration of the Passover.

He ends off still discussing Easter:

Similar motives must be attributed to those who observe different practices in the celebration of the feast which has led us into this long digression.

Between those two quotes is this:

In some churches the people fast three alternate weeks, during the space of six or seven weeks, whereas in others they fast continuously during the three weeks immediately preceding the festival. Some people, as the Montanists, only fast two weeks. Assemblies are not held in all churches on the same time or manner. The people of Constantinople, and almost everywhere, assemble together on the Sabbath, as well as on the first day of the week, which custom is never observed at Rome or at Alexandria.

Adventists only quote the last sentence. They omit the part about the fasting, just as they omit the part about fasting from their quote from Socrates. It's less clear in Sozomen that the last sentence deals with fasting, but the parallel sentence in Socrates clearly does. Most Christians celebrate the Eucharist on Holy Saturday but fasted on that day; Egyptian Christians celebrated the Eucharist and did not fast; Roman and Alexandrian Christians fasted and did not celebrate the Eucharist.

So much for the butchering of historical sources to make Easter customs look like permanent, year-long sabbath observance.

Chapter 46: Adventist misrepresentation of St Patrick

St Patrick is imagined to be a Sabbath keeper by many Adventists. The two writings we have of his, the [Confession of St Patrick](#) and his [Letter to Coroticus](#), say nothing about the Sabbath.

Nothing Adventist or Sabbatarian about those letters – in fact they are quite Catholic. Do you know of Adventist bishops? Adventists who do penance? Adventists monks and nuns? He certainly didn't believe in unconsciousness after death, awaiting the resurrection of the body.

The one minor thing Adventists can use to pretend he wasn't Catholic was the fact that his father was a deacon, and his grandfather was a priest. Their claim based on this?

“The absence of celibacy in the Celtic Church gives added proof to the fact that the believers had no connection with the church at Rome.”

– Sabbath Truth (sic) website

This is absurd. Catholicism, and really only fully so in the West, practices celibacy as a discipline, not a doctrine of faith. And what's more, celibacy only became a rule in the 11th century.

Pope Adrian II was married. Maybe he was an Adventist pope? That was 867-872 AD.

Pope Hormisdas (pope from 514-523 AD) was married, and his son became Pope Silverius in 536 AD. Were they Adventists? This was long after Patrick in the 300's AD.

Or is the Sabbath Truth site just misrepresenting the facts in order to push its agenda?

Chapter 47: Why Sunday is an improvement on the sabbath

I've written before that Sunday is not a replacement sabbath, and that the sabbath rest is fulfilled by Jesus himself. The weekly sabbath, and all it represented, lost significance to Christians, and the sabbath's legal force came to an end at the end of the Old Covenant.

However, it is logical that we need time off from work – we therefore have weekends. And it is logical that, while we can worship God at any time, some days may be set aside as special days of worship.

Christmas – we celebrate Jesus birth; Easter – we celebrate Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

Weekly, the early Christians saw Sunday as the weekly celebration of Jesus' resurrection.

Ignatius of Antioch, 107 AD: *let every friend of Christ keep the Lord's Day as a festival, the resurrection-day, the queen and chief of all the days of the week.*

– Epistle to the Magnesians, chp 9. Ante-Nicene Fathers , vol. 1, pg. 62-63.

The Epistle of Barnabas, 70-120 AD: *Wherefore we Christians keep the eighth day for joy, on which also Jesus arose from the dead and when he appeared ascended into heaven.*

– The Epistle of Barnabas, section 15, 100 AD, Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 1, pg. 147

Justin Martyr, 150 AD: *But Sunday is the day on which we hold our common assembly, because it is the first day of the week and Jesus our saviour on the same day rose from the dead.*

– First apology of Justin, Ch 68

With no weekly 7th day sabbath under the New Covenant, Christians chose the most important day of the week to hold as special – Sunday, the day Jesus rose from the dead.

There are several reasons why.

New Creation

Creation began on the first day of the week. That's Sunday. That's the day that light was created.

John 1:6-9 – *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*

John 8:12 – *Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*

Far greater than the light created on the first day of the physical creation is the Light that is Jesus

Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17 – Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) – Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

Ephesians 4:24 – And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Colossians 3:9-10 – Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him

We were born into a new creation when Jesus rose from the dead.

Exodus vs Resurrection

The two reasons the 10 commandments give for Israel's observance of the sabbath are a) the creation, which ended in the sabbath rest, and b) the exodus from Egypt, which freed Israel from slavery.

Romans 6:18 – Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

Galatians 5:1 – Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

Hebrews 3:6-4:3 – For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

Christ freed us from bondage to sin by his death and resurrection. The exodus from Egypt foreshadowed our escape from the clutches of sin. We have a greater exodus to celebrate now, in Christ.

Sunday completes the sabbath as a day

The new creation came into being on the same day that the old creation came into being, with the resurrection of the true Light of the world.

The old creation ceased on the sabbath, and the new creation took up where it left off, on the following day, the first day of the week.

The exodus from Egypt had a lamb sacrifice; the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross brought about our exodus from a world fallen to sin into a world of grace.

The two things Israel was to look back on were the old creation and the exodus from Egypt. Both are fulfilled in Christ, and he offers us a better celebration – his resurrection from the dead, freeing us from the Egypt of sin, and making us a new creation in Christ.

What better choice is there for a weekly celebration of Jesus than Sunday?

Christ has died!

Christ has risen!

Christ will come again!

Chapter 48: Remember the sabbath day – what does “remember” mean

A common Adventist argument is that “*remember the sabbath*” means that the sabbath existed prior to this instruction.

Remember your dentist appointment.

Am I asking you to remember/think back on your dentist appointment?

Or am I asking you to remember, when the future time comes, to get your teeth checked?

Strong’s [H2142](#)

zakar

zaw-kar’

A primitive root; properly to mark (so as to be recognized), that is, to remember; by implication to mention; also (as denominative from H2145) to be male: – X burn [incense], X earnestly, be male, (make) mention (of), be mindful, recount, record (-er), remember, make to be remembered, bring (call, come, keep, put) to (in) remembrance, X still, think on, X well.

Brown-Driver-Briggs’ Hebrew Definitions – [H2142](#)

zakar

BDB Definition:

1) to remember, recall, call to mind

1a) (Qal) to remember, recall

1b) (Niphal) to be brought to remembrance, be remembered, be thought of, be brought to mind

1c) (Hiphil)

1c1) to cause to remember, remind

1c2) to cause to be remembered, keep in remembrance

1c3) to mention

1c4) to record

1c5) to make a memorial, make remembrance

Part of Speech: verb

A Related Word by BDB/Strong’s Number: a primitive root

Same Word by TWOT Number: 551

Recognise: ← this is what God is telling them.

If we use the meaning of the Hebrew to translate it “Recognise the sabbath day,” that destroys the Adventist position that God was telling them to look into the past.

Observe the day.

That is why the parallel passage in Deut 5:12 uses a different word:

Strong's [H8104](#)

shamar

shaw-mar'

A primitive root; properly to hedge about (as with thorns), that is, guard; generally to protect, attend to, etc.: – beware, be circumspect, take heed (to self), keep (-er, self), mark, look narrowly, observe, preserve, regard, reserve, save (self), sure, (that lay) wait (for), watch (-man).

Brown-Driver-Briggs' Hebrew Definitions – [H8104](#)

sha^mar

BDB Definition:

1) to keep, guard, observe, give heed

1a) (Qal)

1a1) to keep, have charge of

1a2) to keep, guard, keep watch and ward, protect, save life

1a2a) watch, watchman (participle)

1a3) to watch for, wait for

1a4) to watch, observe

1a5) to keep, retain, treasure up (in memory)

1a6) to keep (within bounds), restrain

1a7) to observe, celebrate, keep (sabbath or covenant or commands), perform (vow)

1a8] to keep, preserve, protect

1a9) to keep, reserve

1b) (Niphal)

1b1) to be on one's guard, take heed, take care, beware

1b2) to keep oneself, refrain, abstain

1b3) to be kept, be guarded

1c) (Piel) to keep, pay heed

1d) (Hithpael) to keep oneself from

Part of Speech: verb

A Related Word by BDB/Strong's Number: a primitive root

Same Word by TWOT Number: 2414

The part about thinking back is not to think back and recall the sabbath. It's about thinking back and recalling the Exodus from Egypt.

Chapter 49: From sunset to sunset

In a rather desperate attempt to claim that a service on the 1st day of the week could not be a Sunday service because it was on a Saturday night, after sunset but before midnight, the author of an article at the notorious Amazing “Facts” says:

This explains why the Sabbath is described in these words, “It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, ... from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.” Leviticus 23:32.

This is the passage that Adventists follow in their sunset to sunset idea of the sabbath. Most of them don’t realise that this is part of the Mosaic law that they consider abolished, because it does not refer to the sabbath, but to the Day of Atonement. The author cleverly conceals this fact with “...” and then lies about what the passage is describing.

From the real Bible:

Lev 23:32 KJV It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.

Interesting. Not about the weekly sabbath at all. Not an uncommon method of explaining the Bible when it comes to Adventists.

See the rest of my comments on Acts 20:7 in Chapter 24 ... the idea that this wasn’t a Sunday service because it was on the 1st day of the week, but before midnight, is just absurd.

Chapter 50: 10 Commandments, Pentecost, and the Holy Spirit

By various means, people have calculated that it was 50 days (inclusive) after Passover that the 10 Commandments were given by God to Moses. One can count the days in the Bible, but it's complex, and not really relevant here. There is also other extra-biblical support for this.

The significance of this is important for Adventists.

The 10 Commandments, as I've shown before, are the Old Covenant law. Their precepts remain valid as they are part of the eternal natural law, the moral law infused in us by God, and the New Law of the New Covenant given by the Holy Spirit.

The Old Covenant prepared us for the New Covenant, and the Old Law prepared us for the New Law.

Today, those Christians who celebrate Jesus' resurrection from the dead count 50 days from Resurrection Sunday to arrive at Pentecost, where we celebrate the giving of the Holy Spirit to the Church (Acts 2).

Psalm 140:30 – *Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.*

So it's not really a surprise to see that, on the anniversary of the giving of the Old Law, the Holy Spirit descends on the Church. Just another sign that we, as Christians, are under a greater moral code than any given in the Old Testament.

The old law was given to Israel. The Holy Spirit was given to the world.

Adventists, who typically do not celebrate much to do with Jesus' life the way Catholics and other Christians do, will miss out on this inconvenient typology. Instead of celebrating the arrival of the Holy Spirit as promised by Jesus, they remain trapped in the Old Covenant, unable to see the New.

Further reading:

[Pentecost and the Ten Commandments](#) ... by Peggy Bowes

Chapter 51: St John Chrysostom on the sabbath

St John Chrysostom makes a very interest point: 9 of the 10 Commandments were part of natural law, known to man before the 10 Commandments, and therefore not in need of any explanation. The sabbath commandment was not like this – it needed to be revealed, and that is why it did not remain binding when the Mosaic Law came to an end – it was not part of natural law.

It is, that when God formed man, he implanted within him from the beginning a natural law. And what then was this natural law? He gave utterance to conscience within us; and made the knowledge of good things, and of those which are the contrary, to be self-taught. For we have no need to learn that fornication is an evil thing, and that chastity is a good thing, but we know this from the first. And that you may learn that we know this from the first, the Lawgiver, when He afterwards gave laws, and said, “You shall not kill,” Exodus 20:13 did not add, “since murder is an evil thing,” but simply said, “You shall not kill;” for He merely prohibited the sin, without teaching. How was it then when He said, “You shall not kill,” that He did not add, “because murder is a wicked thing.” The reason was, that conscience had taught this beforehand; and He speaks thus, as to those who know and understand the point. Wherefore when He speaks to us of another commandment, not known to us by the dictate of consciences He not only prohibits, but adds the reason. When, for instance, He gave commandment respecting the Sabbath; “On the seventh day you shall do no work;” He subjoined also the reason for this cessation. What was this? “Because on the seventh day God rested from all His works which He had begun to make.” (Exodus 20:10) And again; “Because thou were a servant in the land of Egypt.” (Deuteronomy 21:18) For what purpose then I ask did He add a reason respecting the Sabbath, but did no such thing in regard to murder? Because this commandment was not one of the leading ones. It was not one of those which were accurately defined of our conscience, but a kind of partial and temporary one; and for this reason it was abolished afterwards. But those which are necessary and uphold our life, are the following; “You shall not kill; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal.” On this account then He adds no reason in this case, nor enters into any instruction on the matter, but is content with the bare prohibition.

– [Homilies on the Statutes 12:9](#)

Chapter 52: Will Catholics persecute Adventists for sabbath keeping?

Seventh-day Adventists think that in the end times, they will be persecuted by Sunday-keeping Christians, and by Catholics in particular. Why? Because they think observing the weekly sabbath according to some, but not all, of the Old Testament sabbath laws, will be the test commandment, the test that shows they are the true followers of God.

Why is this nonsense?

We can divide the problem into several sub-problems – resting, worship, work, and whether these are enforced by law or not.

- Resting in Sunday should not be a problem for Adventists – if it's enforced rest, they can do push-ups in secret with their curtains closed. And they can watch TV or even do their accounts on Sundays in secret.
- Enforced worship on Sunday should not be a problem – Ellen White said that they should devote Sundays to missionary work under such circumstances:

The light given me by the Lord at a time when we were expecting just such a crisis as you seem to be approaching, was that when the people were moved by a power from beneath to enforce Sunday observance, Seventh-day Adventists were to show their wisdom by refraining from their ordinary work on that day, devoting it to missionary effort.

– Ellen White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9, Page 232

- Enforced work on Saturdays would never be tolerated by anyone – it's absurd.
- Enforced lack of worship on Saturdays would be problematic for the Jews as well, and highly unlikely to succeed. Catholics, who worship at Mass every day of the week, including Saturdays, wouldn't tolerate this either.

Further reading:

National Sunday Law – Fact or Fiction? [Chapter 5 – Is the National Sunday law a real threat?](#)

[National Sunday Law](#) – RationalWiki

[Dies Domini – Pope Saint John Paul II](#)

Chapter 53: The sabbath ended on a Thursday

This was posted on Holy Thursday, 2016

Today, Holy Thursday, is the day that the New Covenant came into being.

Luke 22:19-20 – And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the **new testament** in my blood, which is shed for you.

The Old Covenant came to an end. The sabbath, the sign of the Old Covenant, likewise came to an end. Christians don't observe the sabbath any more.

The Eucharist, the sign of the New Covenant, was instituted today.

Tomorrow, Good Friday, Jesus, the sacrifice ratifying the New Covenant, was slain with the Passover Lambs.

On Holy Saturday, the last sabbath, Jesus is in the tomb.

On Easter Sunday, Jesus rose from the dead, bringing with him the promises of the New Covenant. Jesus was the first-fruits, rising with the Old Covenant type.

The old creation was made new – the new creation. 2 Cor 5:17, Eph 4:24, Col 3:9

The freedom from slavery in Egypt became our freedom from slavery to sin. Rom 6:18, Gal 5:1

The weekly sabbath rest became a permanent rest from our labours in Christ. Matt 11:28, Heb 4

Further reading:

[On Holy Thursday, We Remember Jesus' Gift of Himself in the Eucharist](#) – by Kathy Schiffer, National Catholic Register

Section 3: Prophecy

Revelation Seminars.

Many people have heard of them. They get advertised, people attend, get fed various forms of Adventist propaganda.

But those attending don't get told that it is Adventists that are running this. That would be bad publicity. Slowly, other topics – mostly diet and the law, leading on to the sabbath – are brought to the attention of those attending, or those who show more interest.

Adventism has a few strange ideas about prophecy. They've added up numbers in the Old Testament, claiming they mean something the Bible never ascribes to them, and arrive at dates – dates for Jesus' return (1843, then later 1844) and dates for imaginary events in heaven (1844, after Jesus failed to return on time.)

Here I deal with one of their main theories, one that undoes most of their anti-Catholic claims, and then discuss Catholic alternatives.

Chapter 54: Did the papacy really uproot the 3 horns of Daniel 7:8,24?

This article was written in 1998. Today we have far better resources available, including an extensive internet, which demonstrate this point even better. I hope, in time, to update this with additional sources. In the mean time, referring the reader to the Wikipedia articles on the Vandals, Ostrogoths, and Heruli will suffice. They support what I have to say below, and in particular the dating problem Adventists find themselves with.

I received an e-mail from an Adventist saying the following:

[Dan 7:24] The Roman Empire fell apart in 476AD. In 538AD, pagan rome gave all authority over to papal rome. which began the "Time of papal supremacy"

He followed that statement with the following:

In AD 265, the Heruli were crushingly defeated by a Roman emperor after intructions from the pope. Vandals and the Ostrogoths were also destroyed. This can easily be verified.

I pointed out to him that his statements were inconsistent – he was admitting that the papacy not only existed, but had political power as early as 265 AD, if it was indeed the pope that instructed the Roman Emperor to defeat the Heruli. That was inconsistent with his first statement, and general Adventist "history", which say that the papacy came into power in 538 AD. He backed off briefly, and then sent me a fresh file with the dates and information changed, corrected. This is what he said:

[Dan 7:24] The Roman Empire fell apart in 476AD. In 538AD, pagan rome gave all authority over to papal rome. which began the "Time of papal supremacy". Let us note proof of this fact because of the time of its appearance. it must appear after the division of the Roman Empire. "And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them;" [Daniel 7:24.] The Papacy was established in A.D. 538 when it subdued the Ostrogoths. The ten horns, or the divided kingdom, was established in A.D. 476. Thus you can see at a glance that the Papacy arose immediately after the ten kingdoms, exactly as the prophecy states, "and another shall rise after them." NO other system or power fits in here besides the papacy. Not to then acknowledge the papacy as this system or power, would then doubt God's Word of prophecies which have time after time proven to be 100% ACCURATE.

... History reveals that the Papacy destroyed three of the ten kingdoms, which were as follows. (1) The Heruli in A.D. 493, (2) the Vandals in A.D. 534, (3) the Ostrogoths in A.D. 538.

In what follows, I would like to try to prove two things – a) the three tribes were NOT defeated by the papacy, and were NOT the only three tribes to be defeated like they were, and b) the most essential part of this Adventist prophetic scenario will be debunked when it is shown that the neither

the Western Roman Empire, nor the nations of Western Europe, fit into the “10 horn” image of Daniel/Revelation. Because there were NOT 10 “horns” or kingdoms in this area at this time, it is totally ridiculous to say that these 15-20 nations represent a 10-horned beast!

Without that, none of the Adventists claims can be applied to the papacy, simply because they have found the papacy in entirely the wrong place, and have grossly misunderstood what the Bible, specifically the book of Daniel, is saying. It is obvious to me from the study I have made into the Adventist theory that the Adventist church simply has no clue about what the facts really are.

The Adventist who wrote the above to me insisted that I give him good references for what I claimed – probably because he was shocked at learning the truth, and could not believe that such information could come from real sources. He, on the other hand, did not provide the sources he expected me to provide, except one or two here or there that were Adventist sources anyway, and which are all easily proved to be the distorted propaganda that I am going to demonstrate. For this reason I have listed my sources. below.

The encyclopedic references I have used are as follows:

1. Encyclopedia Britannica
2. The World Book Encyclopedia
3. The New Book of Knowledge
4. Purnell's new English Encyclopedia
5. Collier's Encyclopedia
6. Funk and Wagnall's New Standard Dictionary of the English Language

Please see the articles: Papal States, Rome, Pope, papacy, Catholicism, Roman Empire, Belisarius, Pius VI, Pius VII, Stephen II, Stephen III, Pepin, Franks, Lombards, Burgundians, Vandals, Heruli, Goths, Orthogoths, Visigoths, Celts, Saxons, Germani, Teutronics, Huns, Suebi (Suevi), Quodi, Helveti, Belgi, Gauls, Cimbri, Alemanni, Dacians, Walloons, Venetians, Iberians, Marcomanni, Magyars, Basques, Hungary, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, Austria, England, Rumania, France, Germany, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Mauritania.

The books I looked into are:

1. E Gibbon – The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire
2. P De Rosa – Vicars of Christ – The Dark Side of the Papacy
3. A Momigliano (ed.) – Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century
4. Millar – The Roman Empire and its neighbours
5. AHM Jones – The Later Roman Empire: 284-602AD
6. J Pelikan – The Excellent Empire – The Fall of Rome and the Triumph of the Church
7. S Bullough – Roman Catholicism
8. J Richards – The Popes and the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages: 476-752AD

These references will be adequate to provide all the information I claim. All of the data was taken from encyclopedias, and the books are merely there for backup proof. Further references which

contain still the same information, but which I won't quote as references, as they are not as extensive and all-encompassing, are:

1. G Barraclough – The Origins of Modern Germany
2. H Chadwick – The Early Christian Church
3. O Chadwick – Catholicism and History
4. JG Davies – The Early Christian Church
5. L Duchesne – The Beginnings of the Temporal Sovereignty of the Popes
6. L Duchesne – The Early History of the Christian Church
7. Gregory of Tours – The History of the Franks
8. PA Hughes – A Short History of the Catholic Church
9. P Johnson – A History of Christianity
10. KS Latourette – A History of Christianity

I hope that is sufficient. If you want to look stuff up, I would suggest you go to the encyclopedias first. They contain all the relevant information. The rest contain it too, but it is more difficult to locate. Encyclopedias are easier to obtain in libraries too.

The dates given by the Adventist for the destruction of the Heruli, Ostrogoths, and Vandals are as follows:

- Heruli – 265 AD. I pointed out that this was wrong, and he subsequently changed his story. He then gave the more correct date of 493 AD.
- Vandals in 534 AD
- Ostrogoths in 538 AD

I accept the two dates for the first two (493 and 534). They are correct. The date for the defeat of the Ostrogoths was NOT 538 AD, but rather 555 AD. A minor defeat occurred previously, but my sources give me the date of 540 AD for that one, two years AFTER Adventism's required date.

The Bible says that the three horns were uprooted – history shows that the uprooting of the final of these three horns, the Ostrogoths, was not complete until 555 AD. So either one must count from 555 AD, or one must not count at all from the defeat of the Ostrogoths. To count their defeat from 2 years before a minor irrelevant defeat and 17 years before their actual defeat and annihilation is dishonest manipulation of history, something very typical of Adventists and people like them who have a prophetic agenda to force the facts into.

It is interesting to note that the Visigoths (the western split of the Gothic kingdom) suffered the same type of defeat the Adventists classify as the uprooting of the Ostrogoths (the eastern part) – but they don't say they are also a horn that was uprooted. Why? Is it because it is inconvenient to have more than the biblically required 3 horns to deal with? In fact, if one includes the Visigoths' defeat in Aquitania (equivalent to what the Adventists want to call the Ostrogoths' defeat) then there are SIX horns that were uprooted, NOT THREE. (see later.)

The next point is that Dan 7:24 says that it is the 11th horn that uproots or puts down the three kings. However, in all three cases at hand, the papacy had NOTHING to do with their uprooting! The person who defeated the Ostrogoths and the Vandals was Belisarius, a general in the army of Justinian, emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire. Justinian was a Christian, but his political actions were clearly not influenced by the bishop of a foreign city, Rome. It is yet another Adventist untruthful distortion of the facts to say this.

Let's turn to the Heruli, and see what influence the papacy had in their uprooting. All my sources say they were uprooted by the Lombards in 493 AD. Which is very interesting, because the Lombards were NOT Catholic – they were Arians, enemies of the Catholic Church and of the papacy, and CERTAINLY NOT influenced in their political decisions by their enemy the pope. So, *completely contrary to Daniel 7:24*, the Heruli were NOT put down by the papacy at all, but by the Lombards. Either the Adventist interpretation of Daniel 7:24 is incorrect, or, if the Adventists are right, the actual prophecy given by God to Daniel was faulty.

It is interesting to note that these Arian Lombards were to rule Italy, and Rome, thus allowing the pope no political power in Rome or Italy, from 568 – 774 AD. It was only after a request by Pope Stephen II to King Pepin of the Franks, that caused the Lombards to be kicked out of Rome in 755-6. Pepin then gave land to the papacy – this was the first land the papacy owned, and it is from this point that the temporal rule of the papacy began – NOT as Adventists claim in 538 AD. And what is more, the papal political power did not begin in 538 either – history clearly shows that it began under Constantine the Great, when Christianity became the official religion of the Empire – 380 AD. Some say it started before this, as is evidenced by the activities of the Council of Nicaea in 324-5 AD, but either way, the date cannot be set as late as 538 AD. So here we have incontrovertible proof that the political power of the papacy began in the 300s, and the temporal reign over people and land began in the 700s, and between those dates other people, Arians and Romans, held rule over the land where the pope lived.

Furthermore, the ending of the papal political power (which Adventists claim is the mortal wound) occurred in the 1870's. The papal states were restored to the papacy after 1798 when Napoleon took them away – thus that was NOT a mortal wound, for it was only temporary. The ACTUAL wound, or permanent event, occurred in 1870.

In summary, Adventist dates are wrong, and the three horns were finished being uprooted only in 555 AD. Also, the Adventist theory blatantly contradicts the Bible (Dan 7:24) because the papacy could NOT have had any influence in the Lombardish decision to wipe out the Heruli.

Furthermore, the Adventist theory is wrong because Adventists have failed to accurately identify a 10 horned beast, with 3 horns that get uprooted. The Huns (455 AD) were also a people who were uprooted – this time by the waning Roman Empire, and later finally by the other tribes, the Eastern Empire, and by civil war. Also uprooted were the Alemanni (495 AD). So one has a problem of FIVE horns (SIX if you count the Visigoths) that were uprooted, NOT THREE. One cannot ignore the Huns or the Alemanni, because they were just like the other barbarian tribes that tried to invade Western Rome, e.g. Lombards, Heruli, Ostrogoths, Vandals, Franks, etc. Nor can you call the Huns

the present day Hungarians – these are the descendants of the Magyars; the Huns were absorbed into the surrounding peoples after their defeat, just like the Heruli were, never to be a tribe on their own again.

One Adventist source (Marvin Moore) says that the 10 horns are 10 barbarian nations that tried to invade the Western Roman Empire. The three that were uprooted, he claims were uprooted by the papacy (I have shown that to be false) because they were Arian, and not Catholic. But the Franks were ALSO Arian – they converted to Catholicism in 486. The Lombards were Arian, and only converted long after Pepin kicked them out of Rome in 755 AD. So it is false to say that Catholics ruled Italy and the city of Rome from 538 onwards – they did not. The Visigoths were Arian, and converted in 589 AD. So here we have several more Arian tribes that invaded the Western Empire, yet Moore claims that what made these three horns (Ostrogoths, Vandals, Heruli) different, unique, and worthy of uprooting was that they were the only Arian tribes. Yet another obvious distortion of the truth to promote a faulty prophetic scenario.

Summary – there were more than three Arian horns, and there were more than three uprooted horns.

Let's now count the number of horns in the whole of the Western Empire.

The Adventist who wrote to me counted the following: Germany, England, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Switzerland. And obviously the three uprooted ones – Heruli, Ostrogoths, and Vandals. It appears that Adventists are not united on this matter (see above, where Marvin Moore claims that the 10 tribes were *barbarians* who invaded the Roman Empire – something the English and the Roman Italians were not). But anything that appears to add up to 10 and looks good and is anti-Catholic, is acceptable to the Adventists, it seems.

But here they have made an obvious fallacy – the countries today were NOT the same countries or nations that were around in the days of the Empire. Borders were completely different, and people were completely different. The Spanish and French did not even exist (as single entities) in 538 AD – how on earth could they make up an existing horn of a beast that was current in 538 AD? Furthermore, it is dishonest to classify Italy as only one country, because at that time, and for a long time afterwards, they were made up of different peoples – a least three – the Venetians, the Lombards, and the Italians/Romans themselves. And once again the Adventist has conveniently left out the Huns. And if you want to include Switzerland (the Helvetians), a very minor group in those times, you have to include the more prominent Belgium (made up of the Flemings and the Belgians) as well – they were part of the Western Empire just as much as the rest of the countries were. And since the Adventist wants to include parts of North Africa (the Vandals – Algeria and Tunisia) I feel free to insert Libya and Mauritania as well. So already, counting as the Adventists want us to count, if we look at history and geography honestly, we have more than 10 horns or tribes or nations.

In order to find out who precisely the 10 (or more) horns were, we must look at who the distinct and separate tribes/nations of people were at that time.

I don't know whether the Adventists want to count the nations of the Western Roman Empire, or

just the nations that invaded the Western Roman Empire. Since the one who wrote to me included England, who never invaded the Western Roman Empire, but who was part of it, as a horn, I assume that he meant the former grouping. So I'll deal with that fallacy first.

Let's list the nations/tribes who were to be found within the borders of the Western Roman Empire in 476 AD, the time when the Adventist claims they were all present (including the three he claims were uprooted.)

- Saxons
- Franks
- Lombards
- Burgundians
- Gauls (French Gauls)
- Belgi
- Helvetii (Swiss)
- Italians (i.e. Romans)
- Iberians
- Visigoths
- Basques
- Libyans
- Mauritians (North Africa, next to where the Vandals were located)
- Dacians (Rumania, a Roman province)
- Assorted Slavic peoples
- Alemanni
- And then the 3 the Adventists want uprooted – Ostrogoths, Vandals, and Heruli

Well, that is more than 10 horns/peoples, so I will stop there. If we wanted to get even more pedantic, we could go on.

Notice that I leave out the Germans (specifically the Germani tribe to which the Adventist must be referring), who did not form part of the Western Roman Empire, but were to be found north of the Empire's borders. Some of the Teutonic Germans were found in the Roman Empire (e.g. the Heruli, to name but one) but specifically the Teutonic tribe called the Germani, which was later to become Germany, was outside of the Empire.

Well, that proves that the Western Empire simply cannot be a 10 horned beast.

Let's take a look at the alternative view of this confused group of people, the one used by Moore – that the horns are kingdoms that invaded Rome. First I think it appropriate to note that the Papacy was not a kingdom until 755 AD, and therefore it is dishonest to classify it as a horn here. But we'll let that slip by for now. But note that we can't include England because it never invaded the Empire – it was part of it, though.

Here are a list of barbarian tribes that invaded the Western Roman Empire:

- Huns
- Heruli
- Ostrogoths
- Visigoths
- Vandals
- Franks
- Burgundians
- Lombards
- Allemanni
- Germani (they DID invade, they just weren't part of it)
- Suevi
- Quodi
- Gauls (still on the go at that time)
- Celts (in England)
- Moors (in North Africa)

Well, here again we have more than 10 horns to this beast. Personally I don't think this is what you mean, so we won't go any further.

Summary – there were more than 10 horns to the Western Empire (or her invaders), therefore the biblical prophecy is clearly misinterpreted. There were more than 3 uprootings, hence again the biblical prophecy is misapplied to these people. Furthermore, the papacy was NOT responsible for the uprootings (as required by Dan 7:24), and thus it is even more clear that the Adventist idea of prophecy is false.

I feel that Christians should be honest with the facts of history when trying to dabble in prophecy – something the Adventists are clearly not doing. This attempt to force the Catholic Church into a faulty prophetic mould is common, but a failure once one does some reading.

Chapter 55: A Catholic understanding of St John's Revelation

I was asked about my understanding of the end times and the correct interpretation of Revelation.

My reply was along the lines of:

Revelation is typical apocalyptic literature – the first word of the book is *apocalypsis*. It reveals to us God's work. Whether or not it is intended to reveal the future is very much debatable. The time-line contains the goings on of the time when John wrote, using them as a type of human society, interwoven with a time-line of God's work with man (from beginning to end), interwoven with the time-line of the early Christian liturgy, based on the Jewish liturgy. Whether that time-line of contemporary events matches up with events in the future is debatable. How perfectly it matches up with future events is also debatable – must each individual future fulfilment be an exact match? Many prophecies and types do not match perfectly – David was a type of Jesus, but Jesus never killed anyone to steal their wife. The Passover lamb was a type of Jesus, but there has never been consensus as to whether Jesus ate the Passover lamb when it was eaten by everyone else and died the next day after the lambs were killed (which is an imperfection in the type but not the antitype), or whether he died as the lambs were killed but celebrated Passover with the disciples a day early (the right time for the Essene calendar, but the wrong time for the calendar that had the Passover meal the next day).

There is also a lot of symbolism involved. Few people believe the beast is a literal multi-headed monster, or that there is a literal dragon. Likewise, the literal deaths under Nero – must future parallels be literal deaths or can they be huge suffering of the faithful under an oppressive system? Does massive spiritual death count? Do the literal deaths of those in Africa because nobody cares about whether or not they starve count and fulfil the literal death aspect? Even if the deaths are not caused by a despot intentionally killing people, they are caused by Western (and non-Western) materialism that makes the West rich at the expense of the poor elsewhere. The deaths of the rich can be included – money doesn't bring happiness, materialism is eventually, by some, seen as a failure, resulting in hopelessness, and that brings a high suicide rate.

Is it necessary to count and identify 7 heads and 10 horns out of 20 greedy and materialistic nations in order for us to be able to say that today's world (or the world of the 1700s, or the world of the 1200s, or the world of the 2300s) is depicted in Revelation?

What is more important – identifying the heads and horns precisely in each generation, or fighting the effect they have on the world? What is more important – knowing whether the mark of the beast is materialism (and other modern evils), the wrong day of the week, a barcode on food items, or an identity chip ... or fighting the evils of materialism by feeding the poor and banning the immoral slaughter of innocents, fighting godlessness by turning people to Christ?

Anyway, Catholics do have interpretations of Revelation, and Taylor Marshall has an excellent

series of podcast episodes dealing with just this.

First are two stand-alone episodes, dealing with 666 and the Mark of the Beast, and the end times in general.

[What is 666 and the Mark of the Beast?](#)

[Catholic View of the End Times and Tribulation](#)

Then there is the series on Revelation.

[Catholic Apocalypse: Book of Revelation Audio Commentary by Taylor Marshall PhD](#)

Note: at the time of publication, the above link contains an incomplete index up to chapter 13 of Revelation, which I've tried to make complete [on my own blog here](#).

Chapter 56: Refuting an Adventist theory without providing a replacement theory

I was recently asked about my blog post that is now Chapter 54. I was told that I was being unreasonable in not providing an alternative theory for Daniel's prophecies. If I wanted to refute Adventism's interpretation of Daniel, I needed to provide an alternative theory in addition to showing why Adventism was wrong.

That is not the case. It is quite reasonable to say that one can disprove a theory without needing to supply a complete replacement for it.

The person telling me this said that, for instance, if we thought we could provide evidence that someone other than the Apostle John wrote Revelation, we would also need to provide an alternative author.

Let's use an analogy much like the analogy of Revelation being written by the Apostle John.

The Didache is a first century Christian writing. Nobody knows who wrote it. But we know the approximate date.

Let's say that an Adventist comes along and claims that Ellen White wrote it.

All we need to do to show that this Adventist's claim is false is to show that the document existed prior to the birth of Ellen White. We do not need to prove who the author was. The evidence that Ellen White didn't write it is more than sufficient without providing an alternative author.

Likewise, all we need to do to disprove the Adventist interpretation of Daniel is to show that it is not compatible with the history Adventists claim for it. If the Adventist claim doesn't fit actual history, then the claim is false, whether or not any other explanation is available.

Section 4: Dietary laws

Adventists have some strange ideas about diet. They don't eat pork (an idea they get from the Old Testament) and they avoid coffee (an idea they got from their prophetess Ellen White).

Chapter 57: Clean and unclean meat, part 1

The Bible says that certain animals are not clean, and may not be eaten. Many Christians innocently avoid food containing meat from these animals. Some denominations, like Adventism, make it part of their doctrine that these are unclean and should not be eaten.

What is the context in the Bible, and does it apply to Christians?

Sacrifices to God consisted of ritually clean animals, such as cattle. Yet these sacrifices were only a foreshadowing of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. They could not take away sin. Christians no longer offer animal sacrifices to God. Therefore the sacrificial aspect of clean and unclean animals is not longer relevant.

Hebrews 10:1-4 – For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. **For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.**

There's another aspect to the distinction between clean and unclean animals – it's symbolic of the distinction between Jew and Gentile.

Leviticus 20:23-26 – And ye shall not walk in the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you: for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them. But I have said unto you, Ye shall inherit their land, and I will give it unto you to possess it, a land that floweth with milk and honey: I am the LORD your God, which have separated you from other people. **Ye shall therefore put difference** between clean beasts and unclean, and between unclean fowls and clean: and ye shall not make your souls abominable by beast, or by fowl, or by any manner of living thing that creepeth on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean. And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine.

God separated Israel from other people ... **therefore** they were to differentiate between clean and unclean animals. Israel was God's chosen people – that's why they sacrificed clean animals to him.

But now? We no longer sacrifice animals, and Israel's time as God's chosen people is over. The Gospel has gone out to the entire world, and the distinction between Israel and Gentiles has ended.

Romans 10:12 – For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

Galatians 3:28 – There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 3:11 – Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

God no longer distinguishes between Israel and the rest of the world. His kingdom is open to all.

So should we continue to perpetuate a distinction created for a purpose God has abolished?

Christians today who think it's biblical to differentiate between clean and unclean animals are, at least unknowingly, denying God's revelation that God's kingdom is open to all. They're continuing to create a distinction between Jew and Gentile that the Bible says no longer exists.

This wasn't obvious to all from the start – the Apostles needed to bring together everything Jesus had taught into one whole teaching. Jesus himself said that the Holy Spirit would continue leading them to a fuller truth (John 16:13). So when Peter didn't fully understand that Jew and Gentile were no longer to be separate, God gave him a vision.

Acts 10:9-16 – On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, **What God hath cleansed**, that call not thou common. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

The vision was in the context of clean and unclean animals. We saw above that the distinction between clean and unclean animals was given by God as a symbol of the distinction between Israel and the Gentiles. God is showing Peter that the Gentiles are no longer unclean by using a vision of unclean animals. And the voice says “*What God hath cleansed*” ...

Why on earth would he do and say that if the animals were to continue being considered unclean?

In the next chapter, we'll look at what Jesus and Paul said about what we eat.

Chapter 58: Clean and unclean meat, part 2

In the previous chapter, we saw that the distinction between clean and unclean animals was put in place by God for the purpose of separating Israel, God's chosen people then, from the Gentiles, and this played out in the types of animals used for sacrifices.

We also saw that animal sacrifices have come to an end with Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, and that there is no longer a distinction between Jew and Gentile. We saw the God showed this truth to Peter using as an example ... what? ... clean and unclean animals!

So, what did Jesus say?

Mark 7:18-19 – And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, **purging all meats**?

The KJV was written several centuries back, using English we don't always find to be clear today. Other translations phrase it like this:

RSV: And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a man from outside cannot defile him, since it enters, not his heart but his stomach, and so passes on?" (**Thus he declared all foods clean.**)

NIV: "Are you so dull?" he asked. "Don't you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? For it doesn't go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body." (**In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.**)

ASV: And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Perceive ye not, that whatsoever from without goeth into the man, it cannot defile him; because it goeth not into his heart, but into his belly, and goeth out into the draught? **This he said, making all meats clean.**

ESV: And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (**Thus he declared all foods clean.**)

Most translations into modern English make it very clear. But some claim they are all wrong. Some will argue that the purging refers to evacuation from the intestines. Does that hold up under scrutiny?

The word "purging" is the Greek word καθαρίζω ([katharizō](#)).

It means to make clean. Nowhere in the Bible is it used to refer to the removal of food from one's intestines. The object of the verb is what is made clean, every time. When the verb is performed by

someone on something, that thing is made clean.

The three other times it is used in Mark are found in Mark 1:40-42:

And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

This is what the word καθαρίζω means in Mark:

- 1 – Jesus made him clean (Mark 1:40)
- 2 – Jesus made him clean (Mark 1:41)
- 3 – He was made clean by Jesus (Mark 1:42)
- 4 – All food was made clean by Jesus (Mark 7:19)

Do we believe the way Mark used the word katharizō in his writing, or do we make up our own dictionary and our own grammar to suit our own desires?

If we look at the various translations, we can compare the four clauses in Mark 7:19 –

KJV:

Because it entereth not into his heart
but into the belly
and goeth out into the draught
purging all meats

NIV:

For it doesn't go into their heart
but into their stomach
and then out of the body.
(In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)

ASV:

because it goeth not into his heart
but into his belly
and goeth out into the draught
This he said, making all meats clean.

ESV:

since it enters not his heart
but his stomach
and is expelled
(Thus he declared all foods clean.)

The Clear Word Bible (an Adventist paraphrase of the Bible that makes significant changes):

It doesn't affect his relationship with God
because it passes into his stomach
passes through his intestines
then out of his body

Do you see the parallels? And the mismatch?

All the real Bibles follow the same sequence:

First – not into the heart

Second – into the stomach

Third – out of the body

Fourth – he cleansed (purged, made clean) all meat

Do you see what Adventists need to do in order to avoid that truth? In order for their doctrine to not be destroyed by this verse, they **must** translate the last clause as referring to removal from the intestines. But that is what the **third** clause says, so they need to alter the third clause as well, to something it doesn't say – passing through the intestines.

And how did Jesus start off? He started off by saying:

“whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him” (Mark 7:18)

Adventists (and others) believe that pork **can** defile one. They quote 1 Cor 3:17 to me:

1 Cor 3:17 – If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

But Jesus said that what goes into someone **doesn't** defile them.

Jesus also said the following in Mark 7:18:

“Are ye so without understanding also?”

It would seem that those who change the Word of God to prevent the Bible from showing that Jesus cleansed all food are really and truly without understanding.

I'll close with some advice from Paul:

Romans 14:14 – I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that **there is nothing unclean of itself**: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

Romans 14:2 – For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is **weak, eateth herbs**.

Col 2:16 – **Let no man** therefore judge you in meat ...

Col 2:20-21 – Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (**Touch not; taste not; handle not**)

1 Tim 4:1-4 – Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to **seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils**; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and **commanding to abstain from meats**, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. **For every creature of God is good**, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving

Chapter 59: Debate about Old Testament food laws – Stephen Korsman vs “Annie” Adventist

I posted a photo of Dutch frikandellen in an Adventist Facebook forum to draw out some discussion on Adventist dietary laws, with the hope that I could present, in back and forth discussion fashion, the material on the two previous chapters – Clean and unclean meat Part 1 and Part 2.

It didn't take much leading, and the nature of the Adventist argument was not completely what I expected – more low key and less antagonistic, but nonetheless avoiding addressing points made, or addressing them with verses from the Bible that really had little to do with their defence, both of which I expected. Had it been a different Adventist, it may have been more lively, with more diversion tactics, more irrelevant “evidence” provided.

But it was still interesting, and added an argument or two to the previous chapters. I really hate these Facebook group debates, but they make people think, and that's important. So I do them from time to time, and this one, having some sort of logical flow (albeit an absence of substance in the replies), is more easily copied onto a blog.

Here is the discussion; the person debating has been anonymised to Annie:

Original post:

Stephen Korsman:

Hmmm ... sabbath supper anyone?

Discussion that followed:

Annie:

You're roman catholic. Why post a Sabbath supper?

Stephen Korsman:

Why not? I eat on the sabbath.

Annie:

Hot dogs?

Stephen Korsman:

Dutch frikandellen. Sausage made from pork, beef, chicken, and spices.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frikandel>

Annie:

Disgusting Stephen Korsman

Stephen Korsman:

Why disgusting?

Annie:

The bible says so. We shouldnt eat unclean meat, God wants us to be healthy. Why post this here?
To tempt us?

Stephen Korsman:

Not at all. I thought it would be interesting to discuss.

Annie:

OK. Say what you want to say and Ill reply from scripture.

Stephen Korsman:

Annie, so why do you think it's a health law?

Annie:

The bible says so. Right throughout Leviticus and Numbers. clean is healthy. Who wants to eat dirty meat?

Stephen Korsman:

Not all clean/unclean distinctions are about health, so you can't assume that. Is giving birth to a girl more unhealthy than giving birth to a boy? Does that make the mother more dirty?

[KJV] Leviticus 12:2

Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean.

[KJV] Leviticus 12:5

But if she bear a maid child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her separation: and she shall continue in the blood of her purifying threescore and six days.

Annie:

Thats got nothing to do with food.

Stephen Korsman:

It might not be about food, but it's certainly about clean and unclean states, and in this case it has nothing to do with health issues.

Annie:

Giving birth leaves a woman at risk of infection so it is about health.

Stephen Korsman:

Giving birth to a girl? More than giving birth to a boy? And what makes the woman unclean to touch or have sex with, more so after giving birth to a girl?

Stephen Korsman:

How does a sacrifice take away the health risks and make someone clean?

[KJV] Lev 14:20

And the priest shall offer the burnt offering and the meat offering upon the altar: and the priest shall make an atonement for him, and he shall be clean.

Your turn now Annie. Please show me a verse in the Bible that clearly states that the laws regarding unclean food were given for health reasons.

Annie:

Leviticus Chapter 11 Deuteornomy 14 Go and read them in your bible and come back and show repentance.

Stephen Korsman:

I'll look at those texts. I am curious – why do you capitalise the word “Sabbath” but not “Bible” or “Roman Catholic”?

Stephen Korsman:

Okay. Leviticus 11 explains what is clean and unclean, but it never mentions health as being the reason for the distinction. Deut 14:1-10 is like Lev 11 – it just explains what is clean and unclean but doesn't say that health is the reason for that. Any other passages from the Bible you'd like to share?

Annie:

Exodus 15:26 And he said, If you will carefully listen to the voice of the LORD your God, and will do that which is right in His sight, and will give ear to His commandments, and keep all His laws, I will put none of these diseases upon you, which I have brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the LORD who heals you.

Stephen Korsman:

Exodus 15:26 – this talks about diseases, but the context is not about clean/unclean meat – it's about the plagues of Egypt – you actually quoted this part. Any other passages from the Bible you'd like to share?

Stephen Korsman:

What reasons did God give?

Annie:

Daniel 1:12-15 I beg you, try your servants ten days. And let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our look be seen before you, and the look of the boys who eat of the king's food. And as you see, deal with your servants. So he listened to them in this matter, and tried them for ten days. And at the end of ten days their faces looked fairer and fatter in flesh than all the boys who had eaten the king's food.

Stephen Korsman:

Daniel 1:12-15 doesn't state that the reason for the distinction is health-related; it just shows that what the king was feeding them was less nutritious than what they chose to eat. That could be for

many reasons, and you're jumping to conclusions that are not in the text if you say that it was purely because the king's diet contained unclean meat. Any other passages from the Bible you'd like to share?

Stephen Korsman:

Let's get back to the real reason for the clean/unclean distinction. After several chapters in Leviticus explaining what is clean and unclean, a reason is given.

[KJV] Leviticus 20:25

Ye shall therefore put difference between clean beasts and unclean, and between unclean fowls and clean: and ye shall not make your souls abominable by beast, or by fowl, or by any manner of living thing that creepeth on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean

What reason was given in the verses prior to Lev 20:25?

Annie:

Stephen Korsman all those chapters talk about animals that are good to eat or bad to eat.

Stephen Korsman:

Ummm ... no. This is the reason the Bible gives:

Lev 20:23-24

And ye shall not walk in the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you: for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them. But I have said unto you, Ye shall inherit their land, and I will give it unto you to possess it, a land that floweth with milk and honey: I am the LORD your God, which have separated you from other people.

Stephen Korsman:

Lev 20 is the ONLY place in the Bible that gives the reason for clean vs unclean meat, and the reason is to remind them of the distinction between the gentiles and them as the chosen people of God.

The ONLY reason ever given in the Bible for the classification of unclean vs clean food.

This reason is removed in the New Testament – the gentiles are no longer unclean.

Romans 10:12 – For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

Galatians 3:28 – There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 3:11 – Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

Do you agree that the gentiles are no longer unclean?

Annie:

Yes the Gentiles are no longer unclean because they can become Christian but their paganism is false and unclean. Revelation 21:8

Stephen Korsman:

I fully agree, but Paul is talking about the people, not their religion.

Acts 10 and 11 show that the gentiles are no longer unclean. And it links their previous uncleanness to the same explanation given in Lev 20 – gentiles are unclean, and therefore animals are considered clean or unclean to highlight that difference.

Acts 10:9-16 – On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

Annie:

You arent reading that properly. It shows that the Gentiles are acceptable to God, not unclean meats. Leviticus 11

Stephen Korsman:

Annie – the ONLY reason meat was classified as clean or unclean is now nullified in the New Testament. Is there any OTHER reason to continue classifying meat as clean or unclean? None is given in the Bible. Leviticus 11 – see above for my explanation.

Do you think God tempted Peter with unclean meat and then declared Gentiles clean and didn't bother to explain that unclean meat was still unclean even though the ONLY reason God ever gave for it being unclean no longer applies? Do you think God would use lies and false doctrine to demonstrate a truth?

Stephen Korsman:

Did you know that Jesus declared all food to be clean?

Annie:

Jesus never taught that. The roman catholics teach that but it's not in the bible.

Stephen Korsman:

Mark 7:18-19 – And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?

Do you see that by saying this, Jesus cleansed all meats?

Annie:

You don't understand that verse Stephen Korsman. It means that eventually the meat would go down the toilet. Purged means go out of the body and down the toilet.

Stephen Korsman:

Actually, that's not true at all, Annie. The Greek word is *katharizo*, and is NEVER used in the Bible to mean that. *Katharizo* is used twenty-nine times in the New Testament, and it ALWAYS means that what was "purged" or "cleansed" was *made clean*, and NEVER means that what was "purged" or "cleansed" was removed or eliminated. We are purified, sinners are cleansed, the leper was cleansed, cups are cleaned – we are the thing that "cleansed" acts on. In Mark 7:19, meat is what "cleansed" acts on – so it can only mean that meat was made clean.

I'll list the 4 cases in Mark where this word is used:

- 1 – Jesus made someone clean (Mark 1:40)
- 2 – Jesus made someone clean (Mark 1:41)
- 3 – Someone was made clean by Jesus (Mark 1:42)
- 4 – All food was made clean by Jesus (Mark 7:19)

The KJV isn't clear in its language there, in terms of modern English, but other Bibles translate it more clearly.

Annie:

Mark 7:19 It doesn't affect his relationship with God because it passes into his stomach passes through his intestines then out of his body.

Stephen Korsman:

Where did you get that from? Which Bible are you using?

Stephen Korsman:

All Bible translations follow the same pattern:

First – not into the heart

Second – into the stomach

Third – out of the body

Fourth – he cleansed (purged, made clean) all meat

The fourth part is never a repeat of the third. I checked what you posted and it's from the Adventist Clear Word (yes, I have one near my desk), which has actually changed the passage entirely to mean something else (the third part of the verse became the 4th, and a new 3rd part was inserted that no real Bible has in it). The CW is NOT a Bible, and it's NOT a paraphrase – it's a completely revisionist thing that an Adventist came up with that changes a lot in the Bible to support Adventist theology.

The katharizo of the meat in the 4th part of the verse cannot mean it was removed from the body. That already happened in the third part of the verse.

Annie:

OK. Ill have to look this up and study it properly.

Stephen Korsman:

So, Annie, let me summarise this discussion thus far:

1. You said that the distinction between clean and unclean meat was given as a health law in the Old Testament, but you couldn't show where. I acknowledge that you tried, but those passages did not say what you wanted to prove. You can only infer your own beliefs, and that is eisegesis, not exegesis.
2. There are instances of cleanness vs uncleanness that are clearly not due to health reasons, e.g. the additional week of uncleanness when a woman has a baby girl. And uncleanness can sometimes be removed by a sacrifice, something not possible with health-related uncleanness.
3. The only reason ever given in the Bible (that we've jointly managed to identify) for the clean/unclean distinction in food is that Israel was to be distinguished as different and separate from the gentiles, a distinction that has been removed.
4. Jesus cleansed all meat, and the language used allows only for the meat to be made clean, not for intestines to be made clean by removing the meat via the toilet.

Annie:

What your claiming is not true. The bible teaches these dietary laws because God expects us to look after our bodies. 1 Cor 6:19-20 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit in you, whom you have of God? And you are not your own, for you are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

Stephen Korsman:

Amen to that verse! We should eat in a healthy way. But that's not what the laws about clean/unclean meat are about.

Annie:

You will suffer the consequences of disobeying God's laws. I will answer more tomorrow and show Stephen Korsman is wrong from the bible.

Stephen Korsman:

Annie, see you back tomorrow then! I think this has been a very interesting and enlightening discussion. Would you mind if I posted it on my blog? You'd be anonymous, of course.

Annie:

Go ahead, use it. Someone will read the verses I gave and see the truth.

Annie:

Good night.

Stephen Korsman:

Thanks for the permission, and thanks for the debate. May God bless you, Annie. And please think and pray about what I've shown you, and what you haven't been able to answer now. If you make a list of what I said and what you need answers for, and go and look for those answers, you'll see the points I've been making. I'm looking forward to further answers from you.

Stephen Korsman:

And good night to you too ... bed time for me as well.

Chapter 60: Vegetarianism and Adventism

In a letter to the Adventist Review, someone said:

Hey, of course non-vegetarians can enter heaven. But what will they eat at that long table, plentiful with fruits and vegetables? They will be very hungry.
Santiago, Chile

The Bible does not picture heaven in this way.

Isaiah 25:6 – And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

Ezek 39:19 – And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you.

Psalm 78:25 – Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full.

Psalm 104:27 – These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season.

Matt 25:35 – For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

Col 2:16 – Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:

Rom 14:20 – For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.

Rom 14:17 – **For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink;** but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

The Bible's message is not about meat. Jesus ate meat. The meat and drink are symbols of the heavenly feast that we can identify with.

Chapter 61: Why a bishop may not drink grape juice

Note to Adventist clergy: do you abstain from drinking grape juice?

The Seventh-day Adventist church teaches that the wine referred to in the Bible as permissible is unfermented grape juice. They claim that the Bible condemns the use of fermented grape juice, and only permits the use of unfermented grape juice. Many Adventists – pastors and laity alike – have questioned this, and gone to the Bible and discovered that this teaching is not found there. Instead, the Bible permits drinking of alcoholic beverages in moderation. But many Adventists, as well as other groups such as certain Baptists, continue this teaching.

From the Bible:

Rom 14:6 – He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

Rom 14:21 – It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

Clearly, Paul is telling us that we should not engage in activities that cause our brother to fall. But just as eating meat was permitted by God in the Old Testament, and practised by Jesus in the New Testament, so it is with alcoholic wine.

If we accept the Adventist teaching on alcohol, we are left with a peculiar conclusion when we read certain biblical texts.

1 Tim 3:2-3 – A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

Titus 1:7 – For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;

Paul is explaining how a bishop must be of good moral character. I ask Adventists: why can a bishop not drink grape juice? How does this make him of a lesser moral character, less able to lead his flock?

1 Tim 3:8 – Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;

Paul is explaining how a deacon must likewise be of good moral character. But here he says that the deacon must not drink MUCH wine – obviously an amount that is not “*much wine*” is permitted. So, if we are Adventists, this must be grape juice, because it is permitted. But why can a deacon not drink a lot of grape juice?

Titus 2:3 – The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things;

Women who drank alcohol wine were quite scandalous in that time. But a little is allowed – it is excess that is prohibited. Adventists would have you believe that women who drank grape juice were causing scandals, and they were only permitted to drink a little grape juice.

1 Peter 4:3 – For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries

Peter criticises the excess of wine. Is he referring to grape juice? I doubt it. But he never condemns moderate alcohol use.

Lev 23:13 – And the meat offering thereof shall be two tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the LORD for a sweet savor: and the drink offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of a hin.

God even commanded that wine be offered as a sacrifice!

Num 6:20 – And the priest shall wave them for a wave offering before the LORD: this is holy for the priest, with the wave breast and heave shoulder: and after that the Nazarite may drink wine.

They MAY drink wine – they have permission to!

This word for wine from Strong's Concordance:

H3196
yayin
yah'-yin
From an unused root meaning to effervesce; wine (as fermented); by implication intoxication: – banqueting, wine, wine [-bibber].

Num 28:7 – And the drink offering thereof shall be the fourth part of a hin for the one lamb: in the holy place shalt thou cause the strong wine to be poured unto the LORD for a drink offering.

This word for strong wine from Strong's Concordance:

H7941
she^ka^r
shay-kawr'
From H7937; an intoxicant, that is, intensely alcoholic liquor: – strong drink, + drunkard, strong wine.

Deut 14:26 – And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for

oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household,

God explicitly permits the drinking of “*strong drink*” – I have yet to see an Adventist answer this text.

Prov 31:6-7 – Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.

Once again, strong drink is permitted – and the context shows that this is alcoholic strong drink, not concentrated grape juice, because it allows him to forget his poverty and misery.

Judges 9:13 – And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?

Adventists such as Dr Samuele Bacchiocchi argue that grape juice cheers one up. How many of you have ever had that experience?

1 Sam 1:14-15 – And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD.

Here BOTH words are used! Eli says Hannah is drunk, and she denies this, saying she has not drunk wine or strong drink – obviously both are capable of making one drunk.

Lev 10:9 – Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations:

Finally, the condemnation of alcoholic beverages is limited to two instances – excessive use, and use in the ministry in cases where such use would make a mockery of God.

Let's follow the Bible's advice, and not Ellen White.

Section 5: The afterlife

Chapter 62: Soul sleep – are the dead alive in heaven, or not?

The state of the dead – alive in Christ, or dead and forgotten?

This is my least favourite topic to discuss when it comes to Adventist and Church of God theology, because I have had this discussion before, and it makes it clear to me that while it is 100% obvious to me that the Bible clearly teaches that the soul lives on after death, it is equally obvious to some others that this is not the case. My best explanation does not change anyone's opinion because to them it is clearly faulty, and their best explanation is clearly faulty to me. To me this is one of those things that prove the inefficiency of having the Bible as sole authority – it is clear in this case that one needs someone to show us what the Bible really says, like the eunuch in Acts 8:31. I believe that Jesus gave us that authority in Matt 16:18-19, among other places, but I will do my best to explain my point of view without that.

First I'll deal with the evolution of the concept of the state of the dead, and then get onto specific biblical arguments about it.

In the beginning of the Bible, the place the dead are in appears to be some place different to their graves (proof: see later). Slowly, we see the development of a different view, a split view. The one view is that the dead are not conscious or aware of anything, but the general view held by most of the people is that of the first part of the Bible, where the dead are seen as being in some place of the dead other than the grave. By the time we get to the latter Old Testament times, we see the view that the dead are alive spiritually. In New Testament times we see that the beliefs of the Sadducees on the state of the dead are corrected by Jesus, who tells them that God is God of the living, not of the dead. This same belief denied the possibility of a resurrection, though the concept was extant in Pharisaic thought. The New Testament goes on to show in various places that the dead are alive in Christ, not in a state of unconsciousness, and that the sleep referred to refers to being unconscious, asleep, in the physical sense, not the spiritual sense.

Now for some biblical examples of what I said above. In Genesis we see the dead as being gathered to their people. This implies not unconsciousness, but a journey to where the fathers and ancestors of the people had gone, a place of the dead which was not the graves they were buried in. If the dead were unconscious, then this idiomatic expression has no meaning, for to be gathered to one's people who simply don't exist is nonsensical. See Gen. 25:8, 35:39, 49:29-33 for this expression. God told Abraham that he would go to his fathers in peace (Gen. 15:15). But Abraham was not buried with his fathers. His father died in Haran (Gen. 11:32), and Abraham went on his journey that God planned for him. He was buried, not with his fathers, but in a cave given to him by the Hittites for the burial of his wife Sarah. How could Abraham go to his fathers in peace, and be gathered to his people, if he was not buried with them, and they were all in a state of non-existence until the resurrection? I must conclude from this that the earliest evidence in the Bible is that the dead were in some place of the dead, not in a state of non-existence. Is there another explanation for this?

1 Samuel 28:3-25 refers to the well known example of the summoning of Samuel by the witch at Endor. It refers to Saul putting away mediums – obviously, if there were mediums in business, the common people must have thought that the dead were alive somewhere and able to be summoned. Saul obviously believed that the person he called up was Samuel. The Bible states nothing to the contrary, and any other interpretation must be forced on this passage – I see no reason (especially in light of the what I am trying to show in this chapter) to accept the assumption that it was a demon appearing like Samuel. The Bible (verses 12, 14, 15) clearly identifies the apparition as Samuel; if the Bible had not meant what is said, it should have given a bit more of a hint.

Other passages, like Isaiah 14:9-10 show the dead in Sheol rising from thrones and speaking. They seem to be addressing Satan. It can be argued that this is mere poetry, is not to be taken literally, and has no impact on whether the dead are conscious or not in the place of the dead. But if you take it in the context of what I will try to show, it does have some relevance.

Now we get to the very interesting case of Ecclesiastes

The author of Ecclesiastes believed that every person got the same fate – eternal unconsciousness – whether he was good or evil (Eccl 2:14). His only reward is the mark he leaves, and the rewards his righteousness and faith bring him in his lifetime. To him the judgement had nothing to do with eternal destiny, but with God's acceptance or rejection of your life, work, faith, and righteousness. He saw a good life and good morals as the end of God's purpose – basically, the death of the wicked are their reward, and the life of the good are their reward, and after that is nothing. All of this is clearly shown in Eccl. 2:14, 2:16, 3:20, 6:6, 6:8, 9:2, 9:5, and 9:10. Is the Bible here teaching is that man has no afterlife at all?

Perhaps he speaks only of this physical life – two texts suggest this, where he talks of man's spirit – Eccl. 3:19-21 and 12:7. In the first he admits that he doesn't know the final end of man's spirit, if it is any different to that of the animals. The book of Ecclesiastes is not meant as a dissertation of the final end of man – it says so. It is a commentary on the pointlessness of this physical existence, and is to be taken in the context of the whole Bible, which does promise a perfect existence after this life. The author of Ecclesiastes is trying to make the point that in this life we will get the most happiness out of living a good, moral, fruitful and wise life, and by avoiding the trappings of the physical pleasures. But what he says on the afterlife is not absolute in any context other than his own morbid pessimism. We cannot say that one verse (9:5) proves that man is unconscious after death any more than we can say that one verse (3:21 or 12:7) proves he is with God. The context of these verses must be taken in the context of the whole book – the former (9:5) to be interpreted with respect to the physical meaning of life in this physical world (once we are dead, physically there is not more life, and what is done is done, and our record is permanent, and our physical punishment or reward complete), and the latter (3:21 or 12:7) to be mere speculation, which the author admits, on what may or may not happen later – if there is a better reward with God then so be it, but if not, and this is all there is, then make the best out of what God gives you here, and he'll reward you for it. This message is a very important one, and probably very necessary for encouraging those within the Church who begin to doubt God's existence and his purpose in their lives – it will keep them on the right path while God continues to work with them and in their lives.

To summarise, one verse makes it quite clear that Ecclesiastes is referring to the physical side of death only, and not to what lies beyond, whether immediate life, or a resurrection following unconsciousness. That verse is Eccl 9:2 – “*One fate comes to all, to the righteous and to the wicked, to the good and the evil ... as is the good man, so is the sinner ...*” Unless we are all doomed to the same spiritual fate as the wicked, this verse must be referring to the fate of the physical body, what the author has seen happen to good and bad people in his vast experience – physical death. If we are to believe it makes any statement on what lies beyond the moment of physical death, then we are in serious trouble – I don’t want the same fate as the wicked. If Eccl 9:5 refers to the after-death state of man, it also says that we have no more reward. I must conclude that the observations of King Solomon were made about the fate and reward of each man this side of the grave, all ending in the grave, and were not observations about the state of the dead at all. Hence, when it says the dead know nothing (9:5) it refers to the fact that a body is obviously quite dead, lacking in consciousness, not knowing anything – the fate of both the good and the wicked. The unconsciousness, in the context of the whole book and its purpose, must refer to the loss of this-worldly awareness, and says nothing about what happens to the spirit.

There is one verse that does extend beyond the grave – Eccl 12:7. All the rest refer to what happens this side of the grave; Eccl 12:7 refers to what happens to man’s spirit – it goes to God who made it. All sorts of theories have been formed about what this spirit is, many based on a false understanding of Eccl 9:5. There is really no biblical evidence that supports a unconscious soul theory, apart from this misunderstood verse. Hence there is no reason to try to explain how the spirit is unconscious while it remains with God.

The next Bible reference is a controversial one – because many Christians won’t accept that it is a valid Bible verse. It is 2 Maccabees 15:11-16, which shows the deceased Jewish high priest Onias, and the prophet Jeremiah, praying for the people of Judah. They are dead, but praying for the Jews. Even if one doesn’t accept this as biblical, it does go to show that it was generally believed that the dead could intercede through prayer to God, for 2 Maccabees formed part of major Jewish literature, and part of the Septuagint, was included in the text of the Bible used by the Apostles, and by early Christians, thrown out by the Jews because it didn’t suit their theology (and by the Protestants because it didn’t suit theirs), and is referred to by Paul in Hebrews 11:35.

On to the New Testament

In the New Testament, Jesus refuted the Sadducees’ concept of no resurrection. He also told them, in Mark 12:26-27, that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was the God of the living, not the dead. If God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and he is specifically God of the living, not the dead, then these three men must be among the living, and not among the dead. That must mean spiritually living, since it is true that they are physically dead. It is also interesting to note that in the preceding verses, the Sadducees asked the question in the future tense – and Jesus answered in the present tense, implying that those things – marrying not, but being like angels – were going on at that moment. Of course, the Bible also talks of a physical resurrection of our bodies, but what Jesus is talking of here is mainly the spiritual one, which, judging by his tenses, occurs at death, else Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would not be among the living, and God would have to be God of the

dead too.

Lazarus and the Rich Man

Next, we deal with the famous story of Lazarus and the Rich Man (Luke 16:19-31), which both sides use to prove their case. Personally I find the explanation given by the Adventists to be rich in imagination. They do a good job of explaining away the obvious, but I don't think it is good enough.

Some say that this, as a parable, should not be taken literally, and what our Lord said really has a hidden meaning. But this cannot be true, for several reasons. St. Luke, as a historian, wrote literally and factually, not cryptically. He surely would have explained the parable if it were not to be taken literally. When our Lord uses parables, they are either references to masters and servants or guests at a feast, which are clearly figurative in meaning, referring to God, us, and the heavenly feast, or they are symbols like fishing nets, mustard trees, and so forth, that are obviously symbols. The most important part of the parable is their clear underlying meaning to us Christians today. The meaning is either explained by the writers, or is quite clear from the context. It was only the Jews in Jesus' day that could not understand some of these parables, because their hearts and minds were closed in order that the Gentiles might also get to hear the word of God (Rom. 11:8). This parable is not like this – all the actions are real human ones, and the Jewish culture at the time would not take it with the pinch of salt some people think it requires. Finally, the question must be asked, *“If Jesus knew something was false, would He use it deliberately to get a point across, while pretending it was true, and not explaining it?”*

My answer – He didn't. When we look at this story, there is no need to interpret it at all – it is quite clear. The apparent meaning doesn't need to be explained away. The rich man died, as did Lazarus. The rich man went to Hades, the realm of the dead. Lazarus was taken to Abraham's bosom – paradise.

What is Abraham's bosom? Well, the Bible tells us that Christians are the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:29). So, upon entering into a relationship with Christ, we become the seed of Abraham, entering into a relationship with him too, signified by the word *“bosom”* – showing intimacy, affection, closeness as when one gets hugged. Abraham has been called “Father of the Faith” based on Hebrews 11. His bosom clearly means the Church, the Body of Christ, the congregation of Christians, the new Israel. If the angels carried Lazarus off to the part of the Church that had left their bodies and are now at home in the Lord (see 2 Cor. 5:1-10), then these people must be alive somewhere with God (who is the God of the living, after all) – in Heaven, or in Paradise. If this were only figurative, why does Lazarus need angels to carry him? I have not yet seen a satisfactory explanation of all the symbolism in this story if it is indeed a parable.

If the dead are indeed either with God or elsewhere, it makes perfect sense for people in heaven to be able to talk or communicate, and if God wishes, to communicate with those in Hell. And that is how the parable continues.

Even as a parable, it still shows a real situation in the spirit world. In other parables, the actions are

entirely possible ones – the sowing of seed was a common practice, the celebration of a party, a wedding, the return of a long lost son – these are all based on real events, activities that are really possible, that do actually happen. So it must be with the story of Lazarus and the Rich man – the events are real, possible events, events that Jesus assumes to be a real representation of what really happens in such a situation. So we must conclude that this parable shows that the events are literal in that they can literally occur, even if the specific case in question is not. There is absolutely no indication that this is a cryptic message with hidden truths, but with a false appearance on the outside.

Also in the New Testament, as in 2 Maccabees, we find the example of the saints in heaven praying to God – Rev 6:9-10. Here we have a point well before any of the resurrections taught by the Churches of God, where we find martyrs in heaven praying to God. Is this mere symbolism, like the verses that talk of blood crying out? Even in those verses, it is clear that the dead are not silent. There is something that cries out, more than just symbolically. When Revelation talks of people in heaven, it refers to real people. 24 elders (Rev 4:4) are never in my experience interpreted as being purely symbolic of things other than people. They may well be symbolic, but the people are real people and their context and actions are real.

Hebrews 12:1 talks of a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us. These witnesses are none other than the dead saints referred to in the preceding verses. If Paul meant to imply merely that there are many saints whose lives witnessed to the glory of God, he would not have used language like “surround.” The image produced was definitely of a spiritual presence of witnesses from the past present in the Church – the faithful departed. The language does not imply a mere existence in the past of faithful people.

2 Cor 5:6-9 talks to us of the difference between being here on earth in our bodies and away from the Lord, and being with the Lord and out of our bodies. On one level it talks of the difference between this-worldly things and things of the Lord. But there is another level, shown by verse 9 – if only the first level applied, all true Christians would be away from the body, at home with the Lord. But verse 9 talks of people who are in both states, all trying to please the Lord. So, unless Paul is teaching that true Christians can be truly at home in the materialistic world, another level of understanding must apply to this passage. Some Christians are still at home in the body, and not yet with the Lord. Other Christians are already dead – away from the body. These same people are at home with the Lord, and, as verse 9 tells us, still working to please Him. That can only mean that Paul understood that people who were at home with the Lord, i.e. no longer at home in the body, were alive and with Christ.

Note verses 1-5, which talk of our bodies as tents, being temporary, while we wait for our heavenly home.

The Apostle John had two disciples whom he trained in the Christian faith, and placed as leaders of the Church at various places. These were Ignatius and Polycarp, who both claim to have known each other in their writings. They were taught that the dead Christians went to heaven when they died. At the time of his execution in Rome in 107 AD, Ignatius, the successor of Peter at Antioch,

wrote that he wished to get this execution over with quickly, and not delay on this earth much longer, so that he would be sooner with God in heaven.

Paul wrote something very similar, in Phil 1:23. Paul writes that on one hand he wishes to depart to be with Christ, and on the other hand he wishes to remain with the Church. Unlike Ignatius, he is not in line for execution, and can still lead and help the Church, so there are two open options for him to choose (if it were his choice.) If he believed that the dead were unconscious, he would realise that if he died, he would not go immediately to Christ. He would have known that he would get to Christ at the same time regardless of what happened, and his choice would have automatically been the unselfish one – staying with the Church, for that was the only way he could truly be with Christ if the only alternative was unconsciousness. To die to get the long wait over with would have been a quick fix, an easy option. But that's not what his writings imply at all. The wording implies that his options were going to Christ, or staying with the Church. He knew that either way he could help the Church, either by the prayers he could pray, as he probably deduced from 2 Maccabees, which he definitely read because he quoted it in Hebrews 11:35. He knew he would be pleasing God (2 Cor 5:9.) That is why a valid alternative was, as he said, departing to be with Christ. In fact the very word “depart” implies more than just a state of unconsciousness – he leaves somewhere to go somewhere else.

Matt 10:28 shows us that the body can die while the soul/spirit lives on. “*And do not fear those who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul ...*” – obviously when a person kills another person, the body dies but the soul does not. The death of the soul is a separate death. The first death is the death of the body, the second death is the death of the soul.

One verse sometimes used to refute all this is John 3:13, where it says that “no-one has ascended into heaven.” That does not at all contradict the teaching that the dead were conscious, for at that time, no man had ascended to heaven – the Jews taught that the dead were all in the place of the dead, Sheol, and the Church taught that up to the time of the Resurrection, people were in a place called Paradise (i.e. Sheol) awaiting entry into heaven, based on 1 Peter 3:19, where Jesus preached to the spirits in prison – this Sheol. If this prison referred to the place of the damned, there was no use preaching, which is what is implied here by the word “*preached*”.

Acts 3:34 talks of David not having risen into heaven. The KJV says, “*David is not ascended.*” More reliable translations say “*David did not ascend*”. The latter are correct. The tense is the aorist tense, means:

that something has happened in a past time relative to the speaker, with no particular focus on its beginning, end, or progress. The Simple Past (he died) tense is usually the best English equivalent.

– Chapman, Benjamin and Shogren, Gary Steven, Greek New Testament Insert (Quakertown, PA: Stylus Publishing) 1994.

So what this verse is saying is that, at the time of his death (to which Luke's quote refers), David did not ascend to heaven. It is saying nothing of David's continuous state in any way. The KJV has used an incorrect rendering of this text, causing the confusion.

1 Peter 3:19 tells of Jesus preaching to spirits in prison, after his death, before his resurrection. The tense used here is the simple past tense, which means that the events must happen in the order they are listed. So, Jesus died in the flesh and was made alive in the spirit, after which he went to the spirits in prison to preach to them. That is the only way in which this verse can be interpreted. 1 Peter 4:6 supports this view – the Gospel was preached even to the dead. The word even implies more than that the people are now dead – it implies that even the dead could have the Gospel preached to them.

Some claim that the preaching of 1 Peter 3:19 was done in the days of Noah, but this is based on misinterpretations of the English text, and is unsupported by the Greek. It is the disobeying that was done in the days of Noah, not the preaching. Who are the spirits in prison? Well, the passage is talking of people who disobeyed, obviously not given the chance to receive saving grace, people who had had their hearts hardened. They were now, in the place of the dead, being preached to in order that they might be given their first chance at salvation. Anyway, the text refers to the spirits in prison, and immediately talks about those who did not obey (in the days of Noah.) So they are obviously one and the same group of people, probably with the rest of the unsaved dead added to them. Why did Peter pick out those who disobeyed in Noah's day as a reference point? Well, he wanted to compare those unsaved by baptism and those who were saved by it, and to do so he compared those unsaved by Noah's flood, and those saved by it. Grammatically, this is the only way the text can be sensibly understood. I see no way around that fact.

Today you will be with me in Paradise!

Finally, we get to Jesus' words on the Cross. He said to the criminal next to him – *“Truly, truly, I say unto you, today you will be with me in paradise.”*

Adventists and others will immediately jump in here to say that the punctuation here is in error. In the original Greek there was no punctuation, and it always had to be supplied by the translators. Thus, they tell us, this verse can also be translated like this: *“Truly, truly, I say unto you today, you will be with me in paradise.”* If that is what Jesus is saying, then he is saying today that the person will be in paradise with him at some point in the future.

But can this verse really be translated this way, or is it a ploy to try to make us accept this false doctrine?

If we take a concordance, and look up every instance where Jesus (or anyone) says *“Truly, truly, I say unto you”* or *“Amen, Amen, I say unto you”* or any of the various translations of this phrase, we will notice that in none of them do we ever find anyone saying, *“Amen, Amen, I say unto you TODAY”*. The expression is ALWAYS *“Amen, amen, I say unto you, [and then the promise or statement of fact].”* Go and look this up for yourself, and go and look up the phrase involved – you will notice that it does not have a time clause in it. Because of the definite consistency in the way this phrase is used, and especially the way in which Jesus uses this phrase, we can be 100% sure that the “today” in the statement in question must belong to the second part of the statement, the promise to the thief on the cross. It cannot belong to the *“Amen, Amen”* or *“Truly, truly”* clause

because it is never used that way. We must accept the grammar of this verse, and accept that that very day, the thief was with Jesus in paradise.

Further reading:

[Absent from the body, present with the Lord – What does Paul teach in 2 Corinthians? ... Dale Ratzlaf](#)

Chapter 63: And no man hath ascended up to heaven

Adventists and others often use the following verse to show that Catholics are wrong in saying that the souls of the dead can go to heaven immediately after death:

John 3:13 – And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

From this verse, they conclude that, because the souls of those who died before Jesus rose from the dead had not gone to heaven, souls must be unconscious after death.

However, this argument would not convince many Catholics. If heaven is where we are to end up, and where the souls of the saved dead go after death, then the interpretation of Adventism, viz. that prior to the time of Christ, souls did not enter that place, then Catholics have no problem with that part of the Adventist claim.

The Catholic scenario, as I see it:

The souls of the dead went to sheol, the place of the dead, also called the Limbo of the Fathers in Catholic texts. Jesus came as man, and, after preaching to the spirits in prison (sheol) and rising from the dead, heaven was opened, man was reunited with God, and souls could enter heaven.

From the [Catholic Encyclopedia](#) on Limbo

In the New Testament, Christ refers by various names and figures to the place or state which Catholic tradition has agreed to call the limbus patrum. In Matt. 8:11, it is spoken of under the figure of a banquet “with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of Heaven” (cf. Luke 8:29; 14:15), and in Matt. 25:10 under the figure of a marriage feast to which the prudent virgins are admitted, while in the parable of Lazarus and Dives it is called “Abraham’s bosom” (Luke 16:22) and in Christ’s words to the penitent thief on Calvary the name paradise is used (Luke 23:43). St. Paul teaches (Eph. 4:9) that before ascending into Heaven Christ “also descended first into the lower parts of the earth,” and St. Peter still more explicitly teaches that “being put to death indeed, in the flesh, but enlivened in the spirit,” Christ went and “preached to those souls that were in prison, which had been some time incredulous, when they waited for the patience of God in the days of Noah” (I Pet 3:18-20).

From Karl Keating’s Catholic Answers site, in [the article on Purgatory](#):

“[the Bible] speaks plainly of a third condition, commonly called the limbo of the Fathers, where the just who had died before the redemption were waiting for heaven to be opened to them.”

So Catholics are not ignoring this text; rather, we have accepted it for 2000 years – this view already existed in Judaism at the time of Christ.

Further reading:

[No One Has Ascended To Heaven](#) ... Jimmy Akin

[Jesus' Descent Into Hell](#) ... Jimmy Akin

Chapter 64: Paradise vs Heaven

In response to my chapter (Chapter 62) on the state of the dead, someone wrote:

I read your article on the state of the dead. I have just one question- If Jesus and the thief went to paradise that very day, why did Jesus tell Mary at the tomb a couple of days later that she was not to touch Him for He had not gone to the Father yet. Guess the Father isn't in paradise huh? Maybe the Father was in Paradise and just didn't want to see His son after the cross? Maybe, God the Father didn't want to be bothered with seeing Jesus, He can be a busy guy I hear. Next time, read the WHOLE Bible.

He didn't read the whole article, which says:

[T]he Church taught that up to the time of the Resurrection, people were in a place called Paradise (i.e. Sheol) awaiting entry into heaven, based on 1 Peter 3:19 ...

The next three quotes are not in the context of Mary Magdalene, but it mentions Christian belief, which is shared by Catholics, Orthodox, and most Protestants.

David Gregson says on the [EWTN](#) website:

The limbo of the fathers is where the souls of the faithful departed were detained until the death of Christ, when He Himself “descended into hell” to deliver them and lead them to heaven (cf. Lk 16:22; Eph 4:9; 1 Pt 3:18-20).

[Wikipedia](#) says:

Several Biblical passages support the belief that people who lived good lives but died before the Resurrection did not go to heaven, but rather had to wait for Christ to open the gates of heaven. Jesus told the “good thief” that the two of them would be together “this day” in “paradise,” (Luke 23:43) but between the Resurrection and the Ascension, Jesus told his followers that he has “not yet ascended to the Father” (John 20:17).

The [Catholic Encyclopedia](#) says:

It is principally on the strength of these Scriptural texts, harmonized with the general doctrine of the Fall and Redemption of mankind, that Catholic tradition has defended the existence of the limbus patrum as a temporary state or place of happiness distinct from Purgatory. As a result of the Fall, Heaven was closed against men. Actual possession of the beatific vision was postponed, even for those already purified from sin, until the Redemption should have been historically completed by Christ's visible ascendancy into Heaven.

Another perfectly valid explanation is that Jesus had not ascended, which he only did in Acts 1:9. Mary was not to cling to him, in the sense of wanting him to stay, and not return to the Father. This is a more accurate translation of “touch” – merely touching him was quite okay, as is shown in later passages, where Thomas touches him.

Chapter 65: Ecclesiastes and the dead

Ecclesiastes can't be used to say that there is no consciousness after death, because the author, Solomon, explicitly states that he does not know. Adventists ignore several key points about Ecclesiastes; an ignorance that is necessary to maintain their theology of the soul.

Eccl 1:3,9,14 – these verses show the context of Solomon's writing – he is writing about the physical world, as it appears to living people, what is “*under the sun*”. He isn't writing about the spiritual life that comes after death. He uses the phrase “*under the sun*” twenty-seven (27) times in the book! Clearly he means it.

Eccl 2:14 says that the good and the wicked go to the same fate. Eccl 3:19 says that man and animals share the same fate. Clearly the author is writing about THIS side of the grave.

Eccl 12:7 – *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*

This is one of two places where Ecclesiastes speaks of what comes after death, and it says the spirit returns to God.

Eccl 3:21 is the other verse that speaks of the spirit of man, and it says it's different to the spirit of animals, because it goes upward instead of downward (presumably to God and not to the earth).

There will be many places in the Bible that write about the human condition this way, e.g. Psalm 146. We can make one of two choices:

1. Misconstrue those passages speaking from a physical perspective as speaking of the afterlife, and then having to perform some quite amazing hermeneutical engineering to convert those passages that clearly speak of consciousness after death into something else, or ...
2. Understand the literary context, and accept those passages speaking from a physical perspective as speaking from a physical perspective, and those speaking from a broader perspective (including the spiritual life) as they are too.

Chapter 66: You will be with me in paradise today

Jesus to the repentant thief on the cross:

Luke 23:43 – And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

Every single time in the Bible that “*Truly I say unto you*” is used (or the equivalent in various translations), it takes the form of “*Truly I say unto you, [statement being made]*”

Never is it “*Truly I say unto you [time that the statement is being made], [statement being made]*”

Therefore, if we let the Bible teach us what it means, and we don’t manipulate its words, Jesus said that the thief would be in paradise with him that very day. Not heaven, but paradise – there is a difference.

Would Adventists be willing to revise Matt 5:18 to say the following?

For verily I say unto you till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled. (Comma-Revised KJV)

I doubt it. Both ways is means the same thing in this case, but it would highlight the biblical truth that the fulfilment has come, something Adventists don’t believe.

Finally, consciousness after death was the mainstream belief, and the first century Jewish historian Josephus attests to this. By telling the thief that he would be in paradise that day, Jesus would have made a statement that fitted perfectly with mainstream Jewish belief, and everyone would have understood it that way.

Are we really willing to believe that Jesus used false doctrine to make a point?

I believe that the Bible shows us the language it uses, and it’s clear that Adventists misplace the comma. And I do not believe that Jesus taught false doctrine in this passage.

Section 6: General articles on Adventism

Chapter 67: An example of how facts can be twisted to bear false witness

The Adventist problem with giving accurate quotes

Please read all of this till the end ... then you'll understand what I am trying to say.

Mis-information #1

Seventh-day Adventism officially teaches that the writings of Ellen White, their prophetess, are inspired by God, and therefore equal to the Bible. Ellen White is their prophet, and these are her words I will quote to you.

See the following quote, where it is even implied that her writings are **better** than the Bible, because they are longer, more recently written, better organised, and can be read in the original language.

As Seventh-day Adventists we are uniquely fortunate in approaching this question. We are not left to find our way, drawing conclusions only from writings penned 19 centuries ago, which have come down to us through varied transcriptions and translations. Concerning inspiration, with us it is an almost contemporary matter, for we have a prophet in our midst... What is more, rather than having in our possession only relatively short documents or a handful of letters, as is the case with the extant records of the Bible prophets, we have the full range of Ellen G. White writings penned through a period of 70 years, embodying her published books, her 4,600 periodical articles, and her manuscripts, letters, and diaries. We have also the testimonies of her contemporaries – eyewitness accounts of those who lived and worked closely with her. Both she and they discussed many points touching on the visions and on the manner in which the light was imparted to her, and how she, in turn, conveyed the messages to those for whom they were intended. In other words, the eyewitnesses discussed the operation of inspiration... Further, she wrote in a modern language, so a large number of people today can study her writings in the original language, without needing to depend on a translation. Rarely, too, is it necessary to depend upon a transcription.
– Inspiration and the Ellen G. White Writings, reprint, p. 3.

Read also the following:

Yet, now when I send you a testimony of warning and reproof, many of you declare it to be merely the opinion of Sister White. You thereby insulted the Spirit of God.
– Testimonies 5, p. 64.

In these letters which I write, in the testimonies I bear, I am presenting to you that which the Lord has presented to me. I do not write one article in the paper expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision-the precious rays of light shining from the throne.
– Testimonies 5 p. 67.

If you lessen the confidence of God's people in the testimonies He has sent them, you are rebelling against God as were Korah, Dathan, and Abriam.

– Testimonies 5 p. 66.

The Testimonies are of the Spirit of God, or of the devil. In arraying yourself against the servants of God you are doing a work either for God or for the devil.

– Testimonies 4 p. 230.

Thus we can see that Adventism officially teaches that Ellen White is inspired, that her writings are the word of God, and since all God's words are equally and fully the word of God, Ellen White is equal to the Bible.

This is false doctrine.

Mis-information #2

I want to present another false teaching of the Adventist church – Arianism, the idea that Jesus is not God. This teaching is contradicted by many texts in the Bible, such as John 1:1, but, as with many such matters, Adventism teaches it anyway.

Here are some quotes from early Adventists, including their prophet Ellen White and her husband, James White.

James White:

Here James is referring to 2 Tim 4:4:

... they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables,” and gives an example of such a fable: “Here we might mention the Trinity, which does away the personality of God and His Son Jesus Christ.

– Review and Herald, Dec. 11, 1855. p. 85.

Also:

... the old unscriptural trinitarian creed, viz. that Jesus is the Eternal God.

– The Day-Star, Jan 21, 1846.

Joseph Bates:

Respecting the trinity, I concluded that it was impossible for me to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, was also the Almighty God, the Father, one and the same being.

– Autobiography (Battle Creek, 1888), 205.

J N Loughborough:

On the Trinity: “There are many objections which we might urge, but on account of our limited space we shall reduce them to the three following: 1. It is contrary to common sense. 2. It is contrary to scripture (sic). Its origin is pagan and fabulous.

– Review and Herald, Nov. 5, 1861.

R. F. Cottrell:

To hold the doctrine of the trinity is not so much an evidence of evil intention as of intoxication from that wine of which all the nations have drunk, The fact that this was one of the leading doctrines, if not the very chief, upon which the bishop of Rome was exalted to the popedom, does not say much in its favor.

– Review and Herald, July 6, 1869.

J. N. Andrews:

And as to the Son of God, he would be excluded also, for he had God for his Father, and did, at some point in the eternity of the past, have a beginning of days.

– Review and Herald, Sept. 7, 1869.

W. W. Prescott:

Christ as twice born, once in eternity, the only begotten of the Father, and once in the flesh ...

– Review and Herald, April 14, 1866, 232.

Uriah Smith:

He calls Jesus:

... the first created being

– Thoughts, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Revelation (Battle Creek, 1865), 59.

Ellen White:

A special light beamed in his (Satan's) countenance, and shone around him brighter and more beautiful than around the other angels: yet Jesus, God's dear Son, had the pre-eminence over all the angelic host. He was one with the Father before the angels were created, Satan was envious of Christ, and gradually assumed command which devolved on Christ alone. The great Creator assembled the heavenly host, that he might in the presence of all the angels confer special honor upon his Son... The Father then made known that it was ordained by himself that Christ, his Son, should be equal with himself; so that wherever was the presence of his Son, it was his own presence... His Son would carry out His will and His purposes, but would do nothing of himself alone.

– Spirit of Prophecy, 1:17, 18

Ellen White also refers to the Holy Spirit as “it”

O my brethren, will you grieve the Holy Spirit, and cause it to depart?

– Selected Messages, book 1, p. 126. See also Testimonies to the Church, 1:124; 1888 Material, 1249; Pamphlet 154, 4; Youth Instructor, 8-1-1895.

Obviously, Adventist belief is unscriptural.

What it all means

Arianism is NOT an official Adventist teaching, although all the quotes are authentic.

Ellen White is probably NOT considered equal to the Bible by Adventism, even though these quotations are the real thing, and even though, in practice, this is often the case.

I have made this phony claim to make a point. Such an extreme is perhaps necessary – some Adventists refuse to acknowledge that quotes need to be taken in context, and they refuse to acknowledge the difference between official Catholic sources and the opinion of Catholics who happen to get published in unofficial sources.

By giving them a list of damning quotes from well-known Adventist founders and elders from the past, they will see that merely quoting unofficial texts does not prove anything, because they know well that Adventism does not officially teach these things (although many do consider Ellen White to be inspired, and Arianism is certainly on the increase within Adventism.)

Hopefully, their response will be to deny these claims, at which point they need to realise that they must be prepared to treat my religion with the same honesty they want me to apply to their religion.

Chapter 68: Ellen White's inspiration on a par with the Bible

Belief in Ellen White as a prophet is one (number 18) of the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

The Ellen G White Estate has the following to say:

We believe that Ellen White was inspired by the Holy Spirit and that her writings, the product of that inspiration, are applicable and authoritative, especially to Seventh-day Adventists. ... We do not believe that the quality or degree of inspiration in the writings of Ellen White is different from that of Scripture.

The statement “*the quality or degree of inspiration in the writings of Ellen White is different from that of Scripture*” is one the Ellen G White Estate does not believe. I’ve come across followers of Herbert Armstrong who believe that one day his (and his son’s) writings may be recognised as Scripture. But that’s another story.

Chapter 69: Shame on you – Adventists, dishonesty, and the Catholic Church

Out there in real life and on the internet there is a huge collection of anti-Catholic propaganda waiting to ensnare gullible Catholics and others.

When a Catholic meets a certain type of Adventist, this sort of propaganda abounds. Adventists have a reputation for their dishonesty, and not just among Catholics.

Why? I have some theories.

In all the years I've had this website, I've had hundreds of Adventists e-mailing in their responses. In fact, I started this website because of my exposure to dishonest anti-Catholic "evidence". In all that time, I've found it very rare to have an Adventist deal truthfully when the Catholic Church is the topic of discussion. Occasionally one will apologise for the terrible untruths told about the Catholic Church. For those Adventists, I am grateful. I don't know what percentage of the denomination is the honest type. I do know that the denomination itself has a lot to answer for.

Examples of misrepresentation of Catholicism:

- Catholics worship statues
- Catholics worship Mary
- Catholics believe the pope is God, or greater than God
- Catholics changed the 10 commandments and deleted the 2nd commandment
- Catholics don't read or believe the Bible
- Vicarius Filii Dei is a papal title, and it adds up to 666
- The Pope changed the sabbath to Sunday
- The Catholic Church considers Sunday to be its mark of authority over Protestants
- The Jesuits have an oath that includes bashing in babies' heads

Very often, and usually in the case of the last 5 on the list, Adventists will produce bogus quotes or quotes from unofficial Catholic sources like parish bulletins.

The [appendix to this post \(blog only\) has some examples](#) from recent discussions. I'll quote one here.

Adventist: Sunday is the mark of the beast *[shows an image with Pope Benedict XVI over a quote supposedly by Catholics claiming that Sunday is the mark of Catholic authority, and holding up a sign saying "Sunday must be enforced".]*

Catholic: Bogus quote. And nowhere does the Bible say Sunday is the mark of the beast. Should we celebrate Jesus' resurrection on Saturdays?

Adventist: Where in Bible Paul or others celebrate resurrection? You need to be sober

Catholic: So we should rather celebrate the old creation than the new creation, and we should rather celebrate the symbolic freeing from sin than the actual event? It's about priorities. Catholic priority – Christ. Our worship centres around Christ. We celebrate his birth, his resurrection, his baptism, his ascension. We've moved beyond the shadows of the Old Testament.

Adventist: You are child of Satan, that's why you have many ways to reject God's word, MARK 7:6-9

Catholic: Thanks. I will pray for you too.

When Catholics debate Adventist teachings, do we do the same? By and large, no. Adventism isn't very high up on the radar of the Catholic Church at all, and that goes for most Catholics too. Some of us pay more attention to Adventism because of the problem of Catholics (and others) being taken in by the misinformation.

So when we disagree with Ellen White, for example, we quote her in context, showing that context to be valid, and our showing supporting evidence as to what she believed when she wrote what she did is not dishonest. Maybe we make a mistake occasionally, but then show us where our mistake is. I've dumped 75% of the arguments against Ellen White because I don't think they're sound. But more than enough remain to make a case against her.

The difference is that when Adventists quote Catholicism they do so selectively, choosing only what suits them, and usually not anything official. Indeed, they often can't quote anything official, because most of what Adventists claim the Catholic Church teaches was never written down in any official document simply because it's not what Catholicism teaches. Actual evidence from official Catholic documents usually gets ignored, because it doesn't fit the Adventist world-view that Catholicism is corrupt and unscriptural and claims all sorts of nonsense.

In general, Adventist claims about Catholic admissions do not hold up under even minor scrutiny. They end up being real papal quotes ripped from context and re-interpreted as only Adventists know how, or they're not official Catholic statements at all. Any Catholic can say anything, but that doesn't make it official Catholic teaching. For example, the Catholic Church officially teaches (not in newspaper clippings) that the Apostles began Sunday observance. So only ignorant or deliberately dishonest Adventists can claim that the Catholic Church teaches otherwise. History shows that 538 AD was a non-date in the history of the Ostrogoths. 538 AD was somewhere in the middle of a 20 year war they were involved in. Yet Adventists have their own version of history, just as they have their own version of Catholicism.

Think about someone standing on the street corner shouting to all who can hear that the Jews kill babies and drink their blood. That is how Adventists sound to the rest of Christianity. And there is little to support their credibility.

What happens when the facts are explained to Adventists?

Take a Catholic practice or doctrine. It's foreign to Adventists, AND it's Catholic, so they

automatically assume it's satanic or pagan. They conveniently ignore the biblical basis for these things, and don't give us the benefit of the doubt when we say we find it in the Bible. Hardly the basis for intelligent discussion. So what next? Presenting them with the biblical and historical evidence doesn't work. They usually just go into denial.

Why is this the case?

I think half the problem with dishonesty is this: they believe without questioning the absolutely infallible teachings of Ellen White passed down through their pastors and teachers. Their world-view is so narrow, and it has been entrenched in them so deeply that many are incapable of dealing with the possibility that things could be different. So when confronted with facts that diverge from their world of possibilities, they close off and go into denial. And because those facts are about something they have been taught to hate and despise, they often react with venom.

In other words, if they're told that Catholics don't worship Mary, or that Catholics read the Bible and are not slaves to every word of every cleric or pope, it's the same to them as being told that the moon doesn't exist and is painted onto the sky. It's an absolute impossibility in their minds that what they've been taught could possibly be wrong. To consider such a thing would undermine a world-view built on anti-Catholic misunderstandings, and that is something more central to their faith than most other things, and more so for Adventists than the average anti-Catholic because the reliability of their prophetess, and their entire faith, would fall without it.

This is called cognitive dissonance, which Wikipedia defines as follows:

In psychology, cognitive dissonance is the mental stress or discomfort experienced by an individual who holds two or more contradictory beliefs, ideas, or values at the same time, or is confronted by new information that conflicts with existing beliefs, ideas, or values.

This basically means that when an Adventist is confronted with facts they don't like, because it is so contradictory to their world-view, they can't process it properly, and react badly.

And, interestingly enough, this is one of the characteristics of a cult.

The solution?

The only way to get through the barrier is a slow, persistent flow of information that eventually will allow questions to be asked.

The ideal conclusion to a discussion between Adventists and Catholics goes like this:

Adventist: Catholic, I understand now why you think XYZ is biblical, but I disagree with your interpretation of the Bible, and think ABC is the correct interpretation.

Catholic: Adventist, I see why you think ABC is supported by biblical evidence, but I still disagree and think XYZ fits the Bible best.

That is something I've only seen once or twice.

I'd like to see more Adventists willing to acknowledge that most of what Adventists claim about the Church is drivel. Those Adventists exist. They just don't frequent groups like the ones I've been on much because they see little need in antagonising Catholics. These Adventists are probably the type of Adventist many Adventists would consider to have forgotten the importance of some of their so-called truth – I've seen them accused of this before.

The communal problem

A further problem on the various forums is that, when one Adventist is shown to be giving dishonest information, it's rare to see another Adventist reprimand them. When one Adventist clearly blatantly lies about someone, or about something one has just said, not even then do they chime in and say anything.

Why is this? Wikipedia's entry on cognitive dissonance includes the following: "*Students judge cheating less harshly after being induced to cheat on a test.*" And double standards – Adventists expect Catholics to be honest, but they don't expect or demand the same level of honesty amongst themselves. This is another characteristic of a cult.

What are the characteristics of a cult?

The Cult Information Centre in the UK needs the following 5 criteria. My commentary is in brackets after each point.

- **It uses psychological coercion to recruit, indoctrinate and retain its members.** (See my discussion of the creation of cognitive dissonance (above) and poisoning the well (below))
- **It forms an elitist totalitarian society.** (Adventists believe they are the true church, an elite called-out group. Yes, other groups believe they are the true church too, but not with the same sort of psychological grip as Adventism and Jehovah's Witnesses and others.)
- **Its founder leader is self-appointed, dogmatic, messianic, not accountable and has charisma.** (Ellen White declared herself to be a prophet, is considered to be inspired and therefore cannot be questioned, and her plagiarism goes unacknowledged by many Adventists (basically she copied from other people's writings, and even copied from them and claimed that these were visions))
- **It believes 'the end justifies the means' in order to solicit funds recruit people.** (Partially applies, because the dishonesty in their portrayal of the Catholic Church (and Protestantism) is a form of "the end justifies the means" reasoning.)
- **Its wealth does not benefit its members or society.** (Does not apply.)

According to this definition, Adventism is not a cult, but it certainly has some of characteristics of one.

CARM lists the following characteristics of a cult that fit Adventism:

- Leaders are often seen as prophets, apostles, or special individuals with unusual connections to God. This helps a person give themselves over psychologically to trusting someone else for their spiritual welfare.
- Exclusivity
- Persecution complex
- Special Knowledge
- Salvation
- Group Think
- Cognitive Dissonance
- Shunning

The poisoned well

Another problem with Adventism, highlighted recently by Tesa Beem on Facebook, is that of poisoning the well.

Tesa highlighted it in the context of Ellen White, who poisoned the well in such a way that contemplating leaving Adventism would be horrendous.

It is a type of ad hominem trick that makes one suspicious of another person. ... Many people today use the term a little more loosely, they may say that “poisoning the well” is for anything that can be pre-corrupted through suspicion. ...

She made the statement that there would be those who would come and seek to discredit her and something to the effect that you can know they are in error by the fact that they seek to discredit her.

Boy, can you imagine a politician saying that? “There will be those who come in and seek to run against me. You can KNOW they are corrupt and evil because they seek to unseat me.....”

However, for many Adventists, Ellen has so effectively poisoned the well, that they are fearful of questioning her prophecies or writings. My husband expresses this with the idea that she had booby trapped all the exits.

The same can be said for the way Adventism has poisoned the well of Catholicism. By indoctrinating her followers to the extent that serious cognitive dissonance results when they are exposed to the truth about what Catholicism teaches, they have effectively poisoned the Catholic well, making it even harder to a) treat Catholics fairly in a discussion, and b) consider their own errors in their understanding of Catholicism.

As someone pointed out in the comments on Tesa’s post:

On my journey to the Catholic Faith, my greatest fear as I was beginning to understand exactly what Catholicism actually believed and taught (as opposed to what Adventists and Amazing Facts said Catholicism believed and taught) was that I was being deceived by satan. There is not enough space here to describe how deep and painful that fear and struggle was, but suffice it to say, much prayer and an open mind and

God's mercy and grace allowed me to see that most of what I believed about Catholicism as an SDA was false and untrue. Even if a person were to not become a Catholic after discovering what Catholicism actually teaches, an honest person would have to at least admit that what they previously believed about Catholicism was an error, and that they were wrong.

It's a difficult journey for Adventists towards understanding what Catholicism really teaches, and because of the harm done by Adventism, it must be many times more difficult to eventually accept the Catholic faith as truth. Yet many have. They're both saints and martyrs.

And also from the same person:

This is one of the hallmark characteristics of a cult...if anyone disagrees with the leader they are in error and the enemy of the "truth" espoused by that leader. Result: Close your mind, trust no one....and develop creative justifications for doing so.

This phenomenon of both dishonesty and cognitive dissonance was also described by Dale Ratzlaf in his book "[Truth Led Me Out](#)":

This is why I am continually being accused of leaving because I wanted to live in open sin. When I respond that I left because of thorough Bible study and a desire to be true to my conscience, I am often met with a blank, questioning stare.

Disclaimer

Not all Adventists are like this. My contact with Adventism is mostly online, and biased in favour of the dishonest type, and the semi-honest type that sits back and watches the dishonesty without giving a reprimand. However, most Adventists I know in real life harbour the same idea of Catholicism – the imaginary Catholicism of Adventism. My understanding is that Ellen White's sway is declining, and the anti-Catholicism is lessening. But it's still a strong, and powerful, and probably majority movement in Adventist activism.

Here is an interesting admission from Adventist Today, back in 2010, Loren Seibold:

Ellen White fingered Catholicism in a very different world. Historians have shown that 19th-century American anti-Catholicism grew out of a general anti-immigrant nativism. In an era when we have had and could again have a liberty-loving Roman Catholic president, when Catholic immigrants have become our young work force, why can't we preach the gospel without identifying Roman Catholicism as Satan's exclusive tool?
– Letting Roman Catholics off the Hook, Adventist Today

Adventists can, and should, abandon a culturally-based unjustified and dishonest anti-Catholic attitude.

Is there any use to which this dishonesty problem amongst Adventists can be put?

Yes – since their theology is, to a very significant extent, built on misinformation about the Catholic Church, this means that simply showing it to be false fairly rapidly destroys any further

consideration of the theology by people looking into it.

When Adventists misrepresent the Catholic faith in order to make themselves look better, instead of just acknowledging the truth, it's the sort of thing that is the most powerful witness against Adventism.

When one religion has to lie about another religion in order for itself to look Christian, you know there is something seriously wrong with it.

Bishop Fulton Sheen: **“Not 100 in the United States hate the Roman Catholic Church, but millions hate what they mistakenly think the Roman Catholic Church is.”**

And to close, a reminder from their prophetess Ellen White:

“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.”

False speaking in any matter, every attempt or purpose to deceive our neighbor, is here included. An intention to deceive is what constitutes falsehood. By a glance of the eye, a motion of the hand, an expression of the countenance, a falsehood may be told as effectually as by words. All intentional overstatement, every hint or insinuation calculated to convey an erroneous or exaggerated impression, even the statement of facts in such a manner as to mislead, is falsehood. This precept forbids every effort to injure our neighbor's reputation by misrepresentation or evil surmising, by slander or tale bearing. Even the intentional suppression of truth, by which injury may result to others, is a violation of the ninth commandment.

– Ellen G White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p309

Chapter 70: The original Adventists

Again, in his latest Endtime Issues, #144 Dr Samuele Bacchiocchi has made a very insightful statement about the origins of Adventism. He has stated this before (Endtime Issues 134).

He admits the following:

- most Adventist pioneers were anti-Trinitarians
- they believed Jesus Christ was created by God

These are his words:

The history of the Adventist church reveals the struggle to gradually overcome doctrinal positions that proved to be unbiblical. For example, initially most of our pioneers were anti-Trinitarians. They did NOT believe that Jesus was co-eternal with the Father. They maintained that Christ was created by God. This is the position of the Jehovah Witnesses and of the Church of God Seven Day, both of which trace their roots to our Adventist Church. The difference is that our Adventist church eventually abandoned the heretical Arian view of Christ, while these churches remained entrenched in the original teachings of our Adventist church.

If you're looking for a group that is closer to the original Adventist teaching, try the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Modern Adventism has corrected itself, and returned to the historical Christian faith taught by the early Christians. Many within Adventism today are objecting to this, and retain some of these anti-Trinitarian teachings ... one of the reasons they cite is that the Adventist church is accepting Catholic doctrines.

Well, at least they admit that it was the Catholic Church that formulated the doctrine of the Trinity. If you read the writings of the early Christians, you'll see that their teachings were Catholic to the core. The early Christians were not some sort of proto-Protestant, and certainly not some early sort of Adventist.

In Chapter 71, I say the following:

... they did not gradually understand the truth until they had lost most of it first. In a massive sweep, they lost huge chunks of the truth, going their own way, away from the faith revealed and clarified over time by the Holy Spirit. Some went so far as to even deny the Holy Spirit's part in the Trinity. Adventism recovered a lot of the truth. But Adventism still has a way to go on its journey from that huge loss. We should see their founders' rejection of the Trinity as a huge step backwards in terms of sound, biblical teaching. We should see their other teachings, including the sabbath, 1844, the Investigative Judgement, soul sleep, etc., as part of that era of confusion where they lost so much truth. The true remnant would not have lost so much, in order to gain so little.

This still holds true.

Chapter 71: When did Adventism lose the truth?

Another comment about something Dr Samuele Bacchiocchi said in his latest Endtime Issues, number 134:

Incidentally, Jehovah's Witnesses are notorious for rejecting the Trinity, promoting instead the divine creation of Christ. To support their teachings, they have even published their own Bible, based on manuscripts more agreeable to their teachings.

That sounds much like the *Clear World Translation* ... or is it the *New Word*? Or maybe the *New Clear Bible*? For clarification, see "[The Clear Word Bible: Is It the Word of God?](#)" by Dale Ratzlaff and Verle Streifling, and [Deliberate Distortions in SDA's "Clear Word Bible"](#) by Dr. V. Streifling.

It is noteworthy that Jehovah's Witnesses as well as the various churches stemming from Church of God Seventh Day (Worldwide Church of God, United Church of God, Church of God International, etc.), inherited the view of Christ as the first creature of God from our own Seventh-day Adventist Church. The reason is that they left our Adventist church prior to our acceptance of the doctrine of the TRINITY.

Concerned Adventists who reject the TRINITY because some of our pioneers were anti-trinitarian, fail to recognize that our pioneers gradually understood Bible truths. It took them years to sort out what was biblical and what was unbiblical in the teachings of their previous denominations.

– Endtime Issues 134

Bacchiocchi says that the Adventist pioneers gradually understood Bible truths. His argument is strange.

What on earth happened to the Adventist founding fathers to make them lose sight of truths that had been understood and formalised 1500 years before they got confused and denied them? The Trinity was accepted before the Council of Nicaea in 324 AD, but due to debates and discussion, it was only formally defined at that time, drawing a clear line between error and truth.

This was not a case of Adventist pioneers gradually understanding the truth. This was a case of Adventist pioneers slowly pulling themselves out of a pit of false teaching that the rest of Christianity had left behind centuries ago. What got them there? Adventism's roots lie in a religious phenomenon that gave rise to groups like Mormonism, Christian Science, and, yes, the Jehovah's Witnesses. They just did a better job of returning to biblical Christian teaching on many issues, the Trinity being one.

But they did not gradually understand the truth until they had lost most of it first. In a massive sweep, they lost huge chunks of the truth, going their own way, away from the faith revealed and clarified over time by the Holy Spirit. Some went so far as to even deny the Holy Spirit's part in the Trinity. Adventism recovered a lot of the truth. But Adventism still has a way to go on its journey from that huge loss.

We should see their founders' rejection of the Trinity as a huge step backwards in terms of sound, biblical teaching. We should see their other teachings, including the sabbath, 1844, the Investigative Judgement, soul sleep, etc., as part of that era of confusion where they lost so much truth. The true remnant would not have lost so much, in order to gain so little.

There is a form of post-modern Adventism, which is a sign that they are abandoning, albeit slowly, the traditions that they developed a century and a half ago, and returning to orthodox, historical Christianity.

Chapter 72: Adventism cannot be the true remnant church

The true remnant church cannot condone abortion.

A recent discussion I was part of on Facebook was about abortion and Adventism.

Adventists claim Catholics break the 10 commandments by not keeping Saturday as a holy day.

Yet Adventism is pro-abortion. Some Adventist hospitals are abortion mills. Some of the most prolific abortionists are Adventist. Edward Allred claims to have performed **more than 250 000 abortions** in 12 years – and was subsequently honoured by La Sierra university, an Adventist university.

How does that work? Is the commandment against murder not one Adventists believe in? Ask them, and they'll say they do.

Adventist: Stop the habit of finding fault where there is none, the same practice of Pharisees who very strict on laws of which they themselves failed to keep.

Huh? No fault? People finding fault with the slaughter of innocents are like the Pharisees??

Adventist: The problem with this argument is that there is no commandment which says "You shall not have abortions," nor is there one that says abortion is murder. However, the Sabbath commandment is perfectly clear, "REMEMBER the Sabbath day, to keep it holy..." The argument is often used that all abortion is murder, but the Scriptures themselves do not so define it.

Yes, there is a big difference, but it's that abortion causes the death of an innocent human being, and the observance of the sabbath is unnecessary for Christians. There is no commandment that says we shall not kill one-year olds either. All we need to do to justify that is determine that murder is killing of anyone older than one year. We can define many categories of sub-humans if we so chose, and that is been done many times in history. There are many examples in the Bible that show that in the womb there is life. Even assuming that the sabbath was applicable to Christians, if the deliberate ending of an innocent human life is acceptable under some circumstances, then the same applies to the sabbath.

Is Adventism the remnant?

Adventism claims to be the chosen remnant church, called out of the rest of Christianity, which they consider to be the Whore of Babylon and its daughters.

The identifying sign of the remnant, according to Adventism, is that they keep all 10 commandments.

They don't. Officially, Adventism condones abortion. That means, officially, Adventism cannot be the true remnant they claim to be.

From [their official statement on abortion](#):

Abortion is one of the tragic dilemmas of human fallenness. The Church should offer gracious support to those who personally face the decision concerning an abortion. Attitudes of condemnation are inappropriate in those who have accepted the gospel. ...

*The Church does not serve as conscience for individuals; however, it should provide moral guidance. Abortions for reasons of birth control, gender selection, or convenience are not condoned by the Church.**

These guidelines were approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee at the Annual Council session in Silver Spring, Maryland, October 12, 1992.

*But they do for other reasons.

The Adventist church does not serve as conscience for individuals?

- Abortion – no, it does not.
- Sabbath – yes, it does.
- Gambling – yes, it does.
- Alcohol – yes, it does.
- Pork – yes, it does.
- Jewellery – yes, it does.
- Dancing – yes, it does.

I showed (Chapter 69) that Adventism is based on misinformation, and that Adventists promote their religion by misrepresenting other Christians – often deliberately telling lies. I’ve often asked what value a religion has that would need to tell lies about other Christians in order to promote itself. [This Adventist says something similar](#) about Adventism and abortion:

I used to give Bible studies to Catholics. I can no longer do that with a straight face. If I did that today, a Catholic would ask: “What is worse, worshipping God on the wrong day of the week or killing innocent human beings for filthy profit?”

Adventism is not the true remnant church. Based on this alone, it cannot be.

Further reading:

[Facts and Fiction Regarding Adventists and Abortion](#) ... Nic Samojluk

[Investigation into our Adventist involvement with the Abortion Industry](#) ... Nic Samojluk

[Why Adventists Don’t Make a Big Deal About Abortion](#) ... Tesa Beem

[SDA General Conference Abortion Decision 1970 -1971](#) ... Tesa Beem

[Abortion And Its Link With Witchcraft](#) ... Teresa Beem

[La Sierra University’s Edward C. Allred Center honors notorious abortionist](#) ... David Read, ADvindicate

[Seventh-day Adventist University names new economics centre after abortionist](#) ... LifeSite

[Edward “Fast Eddie” Allred](#) ... AbortionDocs.org

Chapter 73: The Law of God vs the Law of Moses

Adventists like to distinguish between the law of God and the law of Moses, between a moral law and a ceremonial law. They have to acknowledge that at least some of the Old Covenant law is no longer applicable to Christians – they don't circumcise or offer animal sacrifices, for instance. But they need to preserve the weekly sabbath as a law obligatory for Christians. I've shown previously that the sabbath law is part of the Old Covenant, and not applicable to Christians. Here I will try to show how their distinctions between different types of laws are not supported by the Bible.

Law of God vs Law of Moses

One of the distinctions is between the law of God and the law of Moses. To Adventists, the law of God is the 10 commandments, and the law of Moses the rest of the Old Testament law.

Luke 2:22-24 – And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.

Luke 2 describes two parts of a law – the ritual purification that Mary underwent, and specifically the sacrifice of two turtledoves.

Lev 12:1-8 gives the law about the purification referred to here. Adventists classify Lev 12 as part of the law of Moses, not the law of God. Luke thinks otherwise, and refers to the sacrifice as “*that which is said in the law of the Lord*” – the Lord here being God, not Lord Moses.

Luke also tells us “*Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord*” and says that this is “*written in the law of the Lord*”. He is referring to Exodus 13:2, which Adventists classify as the law of Moses, not the law of God.

Clearly Luke calls the same law both “*law of Moses*” and “*law of the Lord*”.

2 Chronicles 31:3 calls Numbers 28:9-29:40 the law of God. It refers to:

... the morning and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, as it is written in the law of the LORD. (2 Chronicles 31:3).

In Exodus 20, God gave the 10 commandments, yet Jesus, when expanding on the Old Testament law in Mark 7:10, ascribes this to Moses: “*For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother ...*”

One could go on and on and list many laws assigned to the law of Moses by Adventists and called the law of God by the Bible, or vice versa.

Moral vs Ceremonial law

The other big distinction is between the moral law (which they see as the 10 commandments) and the ceremonial law (which they see as the rest.)

But the weekly sabbath is in the 10 commandments, while Passover is not. To Adventists, this makes the weekly sabbath a moral command, and the Passover not.

While there is a moral component to the sabbath commandment, that component is not the timing, but rather the worship of God.

I have never had a straight answer to this question: Why is the use of one day of the week for worship moral (sabbath) but the use of one day of the year (Passover) ceremonial?

I've been told that the following are ceremonial laws by Adventists:

Exodus 21:33-36 – And if a man shall open a pit, or if a man shall dig a pit, and not cover it, and an ox or an ass fall therein; The owner of the pit shall make it good, and give money unto the owner of them; and the dead beast shall be his. And if one man's ox hurt another's, that he die; then they shall sell the live ox, and divide the money of it; and the dead ox also they shall divide. Or if it be known that the ox hath used to push in time past, and his owner hath not kept him in; he shall surely pay ox for ox; and the dead shall be his own.

I'd call that a biblical basis for the moral principle of restitution and responsibility for wrongs done.

Three examples of moral law outside the decalogue

Exodus 22:21-22 – Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child.

Sounds like moral instruction to me.

Exodus 23:1-2 – Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment.

Still sounds like moral law, but it's outside the 10 commandments.

Leviticus 19:14 – Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the LORD.

That's not ceremonial law. Yet I've had Adventists insist to me that it is.

Adventists will chop and change to make the law suit them. Dietary laws, as I've shown before, were ceremonial in nature, and actually fall into the part of the law Adventists describe as ceremonial / the law of Moses, yet they insist on them to this day, under the pretence that they are "health laws".

Ironically, when Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, he cited Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18, not the 10 commandments, not the sabbath commandment, and nothing from what Adventists consider to be the law of God. He cited what Adventists consider to be the law of Moses, or the ceremonial law, as the greatest commandments.

Matt 22:36-39 – Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Commandments, statutes, ordinances, judgments, and decrees

A third distinction Adventists like to make is that between commandments on the one hand, and statutes, ordinances, judgments, and decrees on the other.

Adventist argument:

10 commandments = commandments

Law of Moses = statutes, ordinances, and decrees

They read most of the Bible in that light – whenever commandments are mentioned, it must be the ten, and whenever statutes or ordinances or decrees or judgments are mentioned, it must be ceremonial law / the Law of Moses.

But the very 10 commandments betray them there. Opening the 10 commandments is the statement that they are “*statutes and judgments*”.

Deut 5:1 – And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them.

Right throughout Deut 5-6, the terms are all used interchangeably.

There are different ways to classify the laws of the Old Testament. One could classify them various types of principles. Moral principles, ceremonial principles, judicial principles. Ceremonial principles under the Old Covenant are not applicable under the New Covenant. How Israel was governed applied to Israel. Moral principles, whether they are found in the 10 commandments or elsewhere in the law of God, remain moral principles under any system of law, including the New Covenant.

However, the unified Old Covenant law is not divided up into such subsections in the Bible. We just put our interpretation of these laws into categories. Nowhere does the Bible separate them into different laws. Most of the time, the laws with different principles are mixed in with each other – ceremonial principles, judicial principles, moral principles. Adventists need to scratch out pieces here and there and pretend they are different sets of laws divided by different principles.

Chapter 74: Ellen White and St Ambrose

Ellen White has a history of making up history. She also has a history of taking completely non-Adventist groups like the Albigensians and Waldensians and claiming they were proto-Adventists. This all questions her credibility as a prophet of God, as all her writings were supposedly inspired. (The Waldensians were far too Catholic to come close to being Adventist, and the Albigensians were gnostics who shunned marriage and believed in a set of two Gods – the evil God of the Old Testament and the good God of the New Testament.)

Quoting Ellen White:

For a number of years Milan was the capital of the kingdom of Italy, and since the fourth century it has surpassed Rome in extent, and in many respects in importance also. Here was the head of the church founded by St. Ambrose, whose diocese maintained its independence of the popes until the middle of the eleventh century. ... their faith was essentially Protestant, and in strong opposition to the Roman creed.

– Ellen White, The Review and Herald, June 1, 1886, [Visit to the Vaudois Valleys](#)

Rubbish. Anyone who has read up on St Ambrose of Milan knows otherwise.

Your grace must be besought not to permit any disturbance of the Roman Church, the head of the whole Roman World and of the most holy faith of the Apostles, for from thence flow out to all the bonds of sacred communion.

– St Ambrose, [To Emperor Gratian](#), Epistle 11:4

There's a lot more to read – [head over to the full article at the Golden Sword Apologetics blog here](#) (which has two YouTube videos as well).

Chapter 75: Albigensians, Waldensians, and Ellen White

Ellen White calls “Christian” what the Bible calls “AntiChrist”

Most Christians realise that the original Church founded by Jesus developed into the Catholic Church of the first, second, and third centuries AD. Some, however, read in their Bibles that Jesus promised in Matt 16:18 that the gates of hell would never prevail against the Church, that Jesus promised in John 14:25-26 that he would send the Holy Spirit to lead the Church to the truth and teach them all things, and that Jesus promised in Matt 28:20 that he would remain with us forever. They realised that either Jesus told the truth and his Church was always preserved with knowledge of the truth under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, or that Jesus was a liar.

If Jesus preserved his Church at all times, and did in fact remain with it at all times as he promised, then the inescapable conclusion is that the Catholic Church of the first, second, third, and later centuries is the Church to which he made these promises. Such a conclusion is unacceptable to those who dislike the Church, and so several Christians who choose not to accept the biblical authority of the Church have tried to find a way around this. They usually turn to the Albigensians, Waldenses, and other heretical sects to try to find a “true church” outside of Catholicism, but always in existence. If they can’t find such a church, they must either accept Catholicism, or consider Jesus to be a liar.

Ellen White was one of these people who grasped desperately at the non-Catholic sects of the Dark Ages to try to find a “true church.” Without knowing the slightest thing about them, she discovered a sect called the Albigensians, saw that they were not Catholic, that they were, like her, rabid anti-Catholics, and claimed that this was in fact the true Church founded by Jesus. This is what she wrote in her “inspired” writings:

The gospel had been planted in Bohemia as early as the ninth century. The Bible was translated, and public worship was conducted, in the language of the people. ... Heaven had provided other agencies for the preservation of the church. Many of the Waldenses and Albigenses, driven by persecution from their homes in France and Italy, came to Bohemia. Though they dared not teach openly, they labored zealously in secret. Thus the true faith was preserved from century to century.

– Ellen White, Great Controversy, Chapter 6, paragraph 1, p97.

Century after century the blood of the saints had been shed. While the Waldenses laid down their lives upon the mountains of Piedmont “for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ,” similar witness to the truth had been borne by their brethren, the Albigenses of France.

– Ellen White, Great Controversy, Ch 15, p271.

But who are these people the Adventist church claims to be the true Christians? Surely they must be similar in doctrine to modern Adventists, if Jesus’ promises were true, and the Church was preserved from the forces of darkness?

Briefly, the Albigensians were a Gnostic sect. Gnosticism is described in the Bible – 1 John 2:18,22 and 2 John 1:7 – they are called “antichrist.” An analysis of their beliefs will show that they cannot be the true Christianity of Jesus and the Apostles. Briefly, these people denied that Jesus was God. They believed in 2 Gods, one good, and one evil. The evil God was the God of the Old Testament, the creator of all physical matter (including the human body) and what it does, and the author of evil. The good God was the creator of the spiritual world and was the God of the New Testament. He sent Jesus, a created being, to earth to liberate the divine souls trapped in the physical bodies by the evil God. They did not believe that Jesus really came in the flesh (cf 1 John 2:18,22 and 2 John 1:7) but rather that this was an illusion. His celestial essence penetrated Mary’s ear, and this is how it got into her to later appear to be born. His suffering was not real, but also merely an illusion. Jesus never actually saved us, he merely showed us the way by which we might obtain salvation. They believed in reincarnation, and eventually salvation after many rebirths. They believed that marriage was to be avoided, and practised instead extramarital sex. They also practised ritual suicide.

Are these the people Ellen White and the Adventist church want to associate themselves with? Many Adventists appear to believe Ellen White when she says these things about Albigensianism. If the Bible calls Gnostic sects “antichrist,” what does that say about Ellen White and her theology?

What about the Waldenses? Were they primitive Adventists? There were two groups of Waldenses – the Perfect ones and the Friends or Believers. The Believers stayed within the Catholic Church, receiving the Catholic sacraments, including the Eucharist at the Mass, with the exception of Penance, which they received from their own ministers. The Perfects were divided into 3 classes – bishops, priests, and deacons. The bishops administered the sacraments of confession and the Eucharist, while the priests also helped in hearing confessions of the laity. The Waldenses were very much believers in sacraments, just like Catholics. In fact a lot of their beliefs were very much Catholic, too Catholic in fact for them to pass as an ancient form of Adventism or Protestantism. Is this the sort of religion, with a Mass and priests hearing confession, and most laity receiving Catholic sacraments, the sort of religion that Adventists feel are their spiritual brethren?

My final question is – are these groups of people the original Christian Church, spiritual brethren of the modern Adventist church? That’s what Ellen White is telling you. But it is not what history reveals to be the case.

Further reading:

[Wikipedia: Albigensians](#)

[Wikipedia: Waldenses](#)

[Were the Waldenses primitive “Protestants”? ... Dave Armstrong](#)

[Were the Albigensians primitive “Protestants”? ... Dave Armstrong](#)

Chapter 76: Adventist Review's indirect admission of Ellen White's errors regarding the Albigensians and Waldenses

Many religious groups that have arisen in the last few centuries have faced the problem of their origins in an interesting way. Faced with the fact that the early Christians were not Adventist, Jehovah's Witness, Mormon, or Armstrongite in either their theology or their practices, these groups had to reject these early Christians as a group who were deceived, precursors to the Catholic Church they view as apostate. Those they reject as apostates often include St Polycarp and St Ignatius of Antioch, both disciples of the Apostle John.

Because of this, they had to find another group, or groups, of people to call "true Christians" if they were to continue teaching that the true faith existed without dying out. Some of these modern religious movements did, however, claim that the true Gospel and true Church DID cease to exist, contrary to the promises of Christ himself in Matt 16:18 and 28:20.

The Seventh-day Adventist church was among these groups claiming spiritual allegiance with peculiar sects of the past, with their prophet making pronouncements on this matter as follows:

The gospel had been planted in Bohemia as early as the ninth century. The Bible was translated, and public worship was conducted, in the language of the people. ... Heaven had provided other agencies for the preservation of the church. Many of the Waldenses and Albigenses, driven by persecution from their homes in France and Italy, came to Bohemia. Though they dared not teach openly, they labored zealously in secret. Thus the true faith was preserved from century to century.

– Ellen White, Great Controversy, Chapter 6, paragraph 1, p97.

Century after century the blood of the saints had been shed. While the Waldenses laid down their lives upon the mountains of Piedmont "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ," similar witness to the truth had been borne by their brethren, the Albigenses of France.

– Ellen White, Great Controversy, Ch 15, p271.

Recently, the Adventist Review came out with a statement that is an indirect contradiction of those words, words which many Adventists believe to be inspired. In an article by Ed Christian entitled "One Person's Heretic Is the Next Person's Martyr", there is a plain admission as to the beliefs and practices of the Albigensians. He says:

I know people who, because of a few comments in Ellen White's book The Great Controversy, have a great fondness for the Albigensians (or Cathars), who were also considered heretics. Many were killed for their faith. These Cathars were very different from the Waldensians. They believed that Jesus was an angel, denied Jesus was really a man who died and was resurrected, and believed the Old Testament came from Satan. They discouraged marriage. They were in their day what David Koresh's Branch Davidians are in ours. Were they heretics or martyrs? Could they be both?

– Adventist Review, Nov 20, 2003

It must be somewhat embarrassing to have a prophet who claims that people with such beliefs were the true Christians preserving the true faith. What does that say about her theology? And her status as prophet?

It's interesting to note that the author also states that James White (their prophet's husband) and Uriah Smith, early Adventist leaders, taught a similar doctrine about the nature of Christ to that of the ancient Arians and the modern Jehovah's Witnesses. In their interpretation of Daniel 7, they claim that the papacy uprooted three groups of Arians (i.e. the good guys). Notwithstanding the fact that the historical facts simply don't fit their interpretation of Daniel 7, it's interesting that their subtle identification with groups whose doctrine denied the divinity of Christ is made considerably less subtle by the acceptance of that doctrine by the early Adventists.

The author makes a profound statement near the end of his article:

Is anyone who disagrees with church beliefs a heretic, or should we reserve that title for those who deny God and scoff at godliness?

Chapter 77: When was the Day of Atonement in 1844?

Seventh-day Adventists claim that in 1844, a very small Jewish sect called the “Karaites,” used a different calendar and thus celebrated the Day of Atonement (10th of Tishri) on October 22, one month later than the Rabbinical/Orthodox Jews who did so on September 23.

– [Truth or Fables](#)

This is an important topic, because if October 22 1844 was a meaningless date in the biblical calendar, then it ruins the whole Adventist theological system. They got it wrong the first time round, predicting the return of Christ, but they never gave up on the date. They should.

The tenth day of the seventh month, the great Day of Atonement, the time of the cleansing of the sanctuary, which in the year 1844 fell upon the 22d of October, was regarded as the time of the Lord’s coming. This was in harmony with the proofs already presented that the 2300 days would terminate in the autumn ... the close of the 2300 days in the autumn of 1844, stand without impeachment.

– Ellen White, The Great Controversy, pp 400, 457

One of the major reasons why Adventists cannot discard this date is that a prophet of their church has stated that this was the correct date. Either they have to acknowledge her error, or they have to stick to their non-date. To do so, they pretended that the Karaite Jews used this date.

Karaite statements from [Truth or Fables](#):

Yom Kippur must have been celebrated by the Karaites in late September 1844 in accordance with the 19 year Rabbinic cycle and not in late October 1844.

In the year 1844 it is on Monday 23rd September for the Karaite and Rabinnical.

Documentary evidence from the time confirms this.

For more info, see [Day of Atonement of the Karaite Jews in 1844](#) and [When Was the Day of Atonement in 1844?](#) on the Truth or Fables website.

Chapter 78: The animal origins of non-white people

The idea that certain races of non-white people are derived from mating between animals and humans won't go down well in today's society. Never mind that it's rubbish. Which is one reason why you won't hear it taught from Adventist pulpits, or hear it preached in the prophecy seminars ("Revelation Seminars") that one later discovers to be Adventist-run.

This was written by Ellen White (no pun intended on her name) – the Adventist prophetess, whose inspiration is of the same degree as the inspiration of the Bible (*"We do not believe that the quality or degree of inspiration in the writings of Ellen White is different from that of Scripture."* - Ellen White Estate)

Ellen's statements:

But if there was one sin above another which called for the destruction of the race by the flood, it was the base crime of amalgamation of man and beast which defaced the image of God, and caused confusion everywhere.

– Ellen White, Spiritual Gifts, Vol. 3, p. 64.

Every species of animal which God had created were preserved in the ark. The confused species which God did not create, which were the result of amalgamation, were destroyed by the flood. Since the flood there has been amalgamation of man and beast, as may be seen in the almost endless varieties of species of animals, and in certain races of men.

– Ellen White, Spiritual Gifts, Vol. 3, p. 75.

Although modern Adventists try to deny that she taught this, it was taught during her time by others, and her teaching was defended by some of her contemporaries, such as Uriah Smith, with her knowledge. Her husband even gave Smith's book a glowing review:

The Association has just published a pamphlet entitled, "The Visions of Mrs. E.G. White, A Manifestation of Spiritual Gifts According to the Scriptures." It is written by the editor of the Review. While carefully reading the manuscript, I felt grateful to God that our people could have this able defense of those views they so much love and prize, which others despise and oppose.

– James White, Review, Aug. 15, 1868.

Contemporaneous teachings:

...that crosses between men and animals had created a no-man's-land between man and beast, populated by gorillas, chimpanzees, wild bushmen of Africa, Patagonians, and Hottentots.

– Gordon Shigley, "Amalgamation of Man and Beast: What Did Ellen White Mean?", Spectrum, vol. 12, no. 4, p. 13.

Uriah Smith's defence quotes Ellen, then defends calling these races human beings, even though certain races visibly prove Ellen right:

“Since the flood there has been amalgamation of man and beast, as may be seen in the almost endless varieties of species of animals, and in certain races of men.” This view was given for the purpose of illustrating the deep corruption and crime into which the race fell, even within a few years after the flood that signal manifestation of God’s wrath against human wickedness. There was amalgamation; and the effect is still visible “in certain races of men.” Mark, those excepting the animals upon whom the effects of this work are visible, are called by the vision, “men.” Now we have ever supposed that anybody that was called a man, was considered a human being. The vision speaks of all these classes as races of men; yet in the face of this plain declaration, they foolishly assert that the visions teach that some men are not human beings! But does any one deny the general statement contained in the extract given above? They do not. If they did, they could easily be silenced by a reference to such cases as the wild Bushmen of Africa, some tribes of the Hottentots, and perhaps the Digger Indians of our own country, &c. Moreover, naturalists affirm that the line of demarkation between the human and animal races is lost in confusion. It is impossible, as they affirm, to tell just where the human ends and the animal begins. Can we suppose that this was so ordained of God in the beginning? Rather has not sin marred the boundaries of these two kingdoms?

– Uriah Smith, *The Visions of Mrs. E. G. White, A Manifestation of Spiritual gifts According to the Scripture*, pp. 103-4

Adventism has offered all sorts of ideas that this could refer to – genetic engineering (before and since the flood, before the 20th/21st centuries), interracial marriage (enough of those in the Bible, e.g. Moses, to know that it’s okay) or marriage between godly and ungodly people (how does that alter a race, and where do the animals come in?) – but the evidence is against these excuses.

Sad. But truly good that these inspired words of Ellen White are not taken seriously by her followers. Either God inspired racist teaching, or Ellen is not inspired.

Chapter 79: Galatians 4: Adventists are Hagar, Christians are Sarah

Catholics, and most other Christians, believe that we are under the law of Grace, and that the law Jesus gave is greater than, and supersedes, the 10 commandments and the rest of the Old Testament law.

As I've explained before (Chapter 36), the 10 commandments are the words of the Old Covenant, the Covenant given at Sinai, and as such, in a legal sense, Christians are under a different law because we're under a different covenant. The moral principles of the Old Testament, and the 10 commandments, exist under all true laws, and therefore exist within the law of the New Covenant.

Adventists, and some others, differ here. They say that the 10 commandments are unchanging, forever, and are part of God's character.

Christians agree that the principles therein are part of God's character, but disagree with the legal code of the Old Covenant remaining the legal code of the New.

If Adventists are right, then the 10 commandments are the supreme law, above which there is no better law.

Paul tells us differently in 2 Cor 3:7-9:

2 Cor 3:7-9 – But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

There is a law more glorious than the law written on stones. There is a ministration better than the ministration of death.

Galatians 4:22-26 compares two women and two covenants. The women? The two wives of Abraham – Hagar and Sarah. The covenants? The Old Covenant at Sinai, and the New Covenant with Christ.

Galatian 4:22-26 – For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

According to Paul, Hagar and the covenant at Sinai are linked, while Sarah and the New Covenant are linked.

The 10 commandments are the very words of the covenant at Sinai.

This means that, for Christian theology, Christians are free, under Jerusalem above, under a promise given to Abraham regarding Sarah.

The other side, those who are Hagar's children – Muslims and Adventists – are in bondage, following the covenant at Sinai.

That's a huge revelation regarding Adventism. They lack, due to their allegiance, a full part in the New Covenant.

Chapter 80: Does Adventism teach a deficient Gospel?

I've been thinking about something for a while. In the recent discussions with Adventists I've started to realise that Saturday observance, in the way modern sabbatarians teach it, is actually more than just a theological difference, more than just a minor error. It's a complete defect in the nature of the New Covenant. Most of Christianity teaches pretty much the same thing. Many Catholic-Protestant disagreements, in my opinion, are the two sides of the same coin arguing with each other about who is the coin. Or, in the Catholic view, Protestant theology simply lacks insight into a specific truth, or lacks completeness. Yes, there are real differences as well, but the two sides, when thinking rationally, can recognise each other as Christians. The Gospel is the same, the concept of the New Covenant with God is the same, the grasp of Christian morality is the same.

When it comes to Sabbatarianism, the authentic Christian relationship with God appears to be there, and for individuals it probably is, but the entire New Covenant they believe in is distorted and faulty. They take half of it, and discard the other half. The Epistle to the Hebrews is emptied of its meaning. They still want to cling to half the Old Covenant, and as a result, their theology is stuck half way between legal-minded Judaism and grace-filled Christianity. Just as Mormonism and the Jehovah's Witnesses have a radically distorted concept of Jesus and the Father, so Sabbatarian theology has a radically distorted theology of the Christian relationship with God. And that's a serious thing to have a problem with.

After years of thinking of the Sabbatarian movement, especially the Adventist church, as mainstream Protestants with a quirk, I'm starting to think of them as a truly borderline Christian religion. Yes, there is the evangelical Adventist movement, and those who adhere to the pseudo-Evangelical Adventist document "*Questions on Doctrine*", and I'd put them in with Evangelical Protestantism, with a quirk, and perhaps a bit laboured with semi-Christian baggage. I do not consider Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses to be unsaved because of their theology, and with all the limitations their theology imposes, I believe they have a good relationship with God.

I'm starting to consider Adventism, in its mainstream form, as producing Christians in the same category as Jehovah's Witnesses. Perhaps this is the reason Adventism was initially classified as a cult by Walter Martin, who reversed his opinion when the Adventists showed their more evangelical Protestant side, a side many Adventists reject to this day.

Deeper than just the sabbath

Dietary laws are another symptom of Adventism's lack of understanding of the New Covenant. In my posts on the dietary laws, I show that the distinction between clean and unclean meat was instituted as a sign of Israel's separation from the Gentiles. In the New Testament, it's revealed to Peter that the Gentiles are no longer to be excluded from God's people, and the symbolic distinction of clean vs unclean meat can be abandoned as it no longer serves any purpose. Paul tells us that we need not be judged by what we eat. Jesus himself declared all food purged of uncleanness.

By clinging to these dietary laws, Adventism seems to fail to grasp the full extent of the Gospel and

the New Covenant. Or perhaps better stated, their defective understanding of the Gospel and New Covenant prevents them from discerning type from antitype, shadow from fulfilment. Their theology, in part, is still waiting for the Messiah to come.

Most Christians, past and present, have celebrated Jesus' birth, resurrection, baptism, and so forth with great joy. Having no holy days of our own instructed explicitly in the Bible, we celebrate Jesus' life. For many Adventists, that's too Catholic, and so they celebrate nothing. Having no holidays of their own instructed explicitly in the Bible, they are left with only Jesus, and can't bring themselves to celebrate him as the rest of us do. (Of course, they have the expectant sabbath we've got the conclusion to.)

Perhaps one of the more sinister indicators of their defective theology is their understanding of Jesus' nature. The rest of Christianity teaches that Jesus had Adam's initial unfallen nature, untainted by sin. Adventists teach that Jesus had a sinful human nature, and managed to resist temptation and live a sinless life, thus being more of an example by which we can save ourselves than a saviour.

He came not to our world to give the obedience of a lesser God to a greater, but as a man to obey God's holy law, and in this way He is our example. The Lord Jesus came to our world, not to reveal what a God could do, but what a man could do, through faith in God's power to help in every emergency.

– Ellen G. White, [Bible Commentary vol 7, p. 929 par. 6](#)

Similarly, that humanity one day will stand before God without Jesus as a mediator is another sinister Adventist teaching. This could be any day now, with 1844 being the first date they assigned this event (after it failed as a prophecy of the return of Jesus on 22 October of that year.) According to Adventists, when Jesus died, the atonement was not complete (cf "It is finished" in John 19:30) but in 1844 he started a new phase of his ministry, which, when completed, would lead into the time when mankind had no mediator any longer. Eventually, according to them, the saved would be resurrected, and spend 1000 years checking the books of judgement in heaven, ensuring God got it right when he decided who was saved and who not.

Adventists:

1. Have their only celebration taken from the Old Covenant and ignore the joys of the New Covenant
2. Celebrate a day looking back to the exodus from Egypt instead of one celebrating our new life in Christ
3. Look back to the old creation and ignore the new
4. Retain the Old Covenant symbolism of the separation between Israel and the Gentiles
5. Have an Old Testament-style prophet who called them out of the rest of Christianity as a "remnant" group, similar to other movements of the time (Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, for example)
6. Believe Jesus had a sinful human nature, and is seen (perhaps like Islam, by some) by many as more of an example than a saviour

7. Believe Jesus' role as mediator will cease at an unknown future date
8. Are like Abraham's wife Hagar, who represents the law given at Sinai (that they follow this law they acknowledge), instead of being like Sarah, who represents the New Covenant (Gal 4:21-31)

These are not necessarily the causes of their theological deficiency, but rather symptoms of something greater and more sinister and heterodox deeper within their theology that makes it significantly defective. I acknowledge that not all Adventists may share a faith this defective, and the Adventists who have led me to this conclusion may not represent the entire denomination. But that this problem exists is surely a sign that there are serious flaws, possibly to the extent of large parts of Adventism lying outside the fringe of normal mainstream Christian theology.

Further reading:

[What Precisely is the Gospel?](#) ... by Bishop Robert Barron

Section 7: The Bible

Chapter 81: Line upon line – interpreting the Bible

Adventists and others often use Isaiah 28:10 to promote a truly absurd way to interpret the Bible. It allows them to take snippets here and snippets there, piece them together, and come to conclusions that none of the original passages support.

Isaiah 28:10 – For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little

An Adventist pastor has some insight into this method on his blog, showing what the text is really likely to mean.

The context of this passage is an oracle against drunken priests who are unable to teach even infants, who cannot even speak properly. And verse 13 makes it abundantly clear that “precept upon precept...” is something detrimental, not a principle of Biblical interpretation. Taken alone verse 12 might sound like a reasonable teaching, but in context we realize that it is the product of drunkenness.

– David Hamstra, Precept Upon Precept?

A comment tells us that in developing their principle of hermeneutics, they have used terrible hermeneutics.

People who use the text as a guide to how to interpret the Bible have turned a mockery of drunkards into wisdom to emulate.

Paul Brydson of the Church of God in Williamstown says:

The NIV Study Bible footnote calls the verses “The mocking response of Isaiah’s hearers.”

Concerning Isaiah’s response in verse 11 he says:

So Isaiah says that this is their condemnation. The word of God will continue to be nothing but “precept upon precept, line upon line” – simplistic, unintelligible babble to their destruction.

“[Misquotes – Here a Little, There a Little](#)” and “[Acts 17:11 Sacred Cow – Precept Upon Precept, Line Upon Line? Commentary on Isaiah 28:10,13](#)” are some useful studies of this verse and its misuse.

Chapter 82: How we know what the New Testament contains

Where did we get the New Testament? How was it compiled?

The Apostles didn't leave instructions as to which writings were to be included in the Bible. That is why there was a lot of debate about which texts were considered inspired in the first few centuries.

Our first list of New Testament books that includes all the books we use today comes from the Catholic bishop Athanasius, who was instrumental in defining the Trinity as doctrine at the Council of Nicaea in 324-5 AD. This was also the first list to exclude texts not considered as canonical today.

Athanasius' 39th Festal Letter in the year 367 AD:

Continuing, I must without hesitation mention the scriptures of the New Testament; they are the following: the four Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, after them the Acts of the Apostles and the seven so-called catholic epistles of the apostles — namely, one of James, two of Peter, then three of John and after these one of Jude. In addition there are fourteen epistles of the apostle Paul written in the following order: the first to the Romans, then two to the Corinthians and then after these the one to the Galatians, following it the one to the Ephesians, thereafter the one to the Philippians and the one to the Colossians and two to the Thessalonians and the epistle to the Hebrews and then immediately two to Timothy, one to Titus and lastly the one to Philemon. Yet further the Revelation of John.

– [New Testament Canon](#), and [Festal Letter of St Athanasius](#)

The second such list was an official statement from Pope St Damasus I in 382 AD – I have added the better-known names in [\[brackets\]](#) where confusion might otherwise arise:

The Decree of Pope St Damasus I, Council of Rome – 382 AD:

It is likewise decreed: Now, indeed, we must treat of the divine Scriptures: what the universal Catholic Church accepts and what she must shun. The list of the Old Testament begins: Genesis, one book; Exodus, one book; Leviticus, one book; Numbers, one book; Deuteronomy, one book; Jesus Nave [\[Joshua\]](#), one book; of Judges, one book; Ruth, one book; of Kings [\[Samuel I+II/Kings I+II\]](#), four books; Paralipomenon [\[Chronicles I+II\]](#), two books; One Hundred and Fifty Psalms, one book; of Solomon, three books: Proverbs, one book; Ecclesiastes, one book; Canticle of Canticles, one book; likewise, Wisdom, one book; Ecclesiasticus (Sirach), one book; Likewise, the list of the Prophets: Isaiah, one book; Jeremias, one book; along with Cinoth, that is, his Lamentations; Ezechiel, one book; Daniel, one book; Osee [\[Hosea\]](#), one book; Amos, one book; Micheas [\[Micah\]](#), one book; Joel, one book; Abdias [\[Obadiah\]](#), one book; Jonas, one book; Nahum, one book; Habacuc, one book; Sophonias [\[Zephaniah\]](#), one book; Aggeus [\[Haggai\]](#), one book; Zacharias, one book; Malachias [\[Malachi\]](#), one book. Likewise, the list of histories: Job, one book; Tobias, one book; Esdras [\[Ezra/Nehemiah\]](#), two books; Esther, one book; Judith, one book; of Maccabees, two books. Likewise, the list of the Scriptures of the New and Eternal Testament, which the

holy and Catholic Church receives: of the Gospels, one book according to Matthew, one book according to Mark, one book according to Luke, one book according to John. The Epistles of the Apostle Paul, fourteen in number: one to the Romans, two to the Corinthians, one to the Ephesians, two to the Thessalonians, one to the Galatians, one to the Philippians, one to the Colossians, two to Timothy, one to Titus one to Philemon, one to the Hebrews. Likewise, one book of the Apocalypse of John. And the Acts of the Apostles, one book. Likewise, the canonical Epistles, seven in number: of the Apostle Peter, two Epistles; of the Apostle James, one Epistle; of the Apostle John, one Epistle; of the other John, a Presbyter, two Epistles; of the Apostle Jude the Zealot, one Epistle. Thus concludes the canon of the New Testament. Likewise it is decreed: After the announcement of all of these prophetic and evangelic or as well as apostolic writings which we have listed above as Scriptures, on which, by the grace of God, the Catholic Church is founded, we have considered that it ought to be announced that although all the Catholic Churches spread abroad through the world comprise but one bridal chamber of Christ, nevertheless, the holy Roman Church has been placed at the forefront not by the conciliar decisions of other Churches, but has received the primacy by the evangelic voice of our Lord and Savior, who says: “You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it; and I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you shall have bound on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall have loosed on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

- [The Canon of Scripture... Who Fired The Decisive Shot?](#)
- and [Decree of Pope Saint Damasus \(382 AD\)](#)

Ironically for those who object loudly to Catholicism, the very New Testament they use was compiled by Catholic bishops and popes, who dealt with the controversy over what was inspired and what was not in the 3 centuries before the final list was completed. The Holy Spirit used the Catholic Church to formalise the New Testament in the form that we know it today, and it is from these 4th century Catholics that we get our canon. If Catholicism is apostate, as some claim, why did God use a group of clerics who honoured Mary, said Mass, kept Sunday and Easter, had 7 sacraments, etc., to bring the inspired word of God together into one volume?

Chapter 83: Whose truth is the real truth, and how can we know? ... or does Sola Scriptura work?

When Christians study the Bible and reach different conclusions, how can they figure out which conclusion is the correct one? Is there a way to know that one is right, apart from the conviction that the Holy Spirit has led one in one's study of the Bible?

When someone has a different interpretation of the Bible to ours, how do we know the Holy Spirit has led us, and not them? How can we be sure that we are right? **Or is there a possibility that we're wrong?**

Let us take, for example, the case of Antony, an Adventist, and Patrick, a Presbyterian. Antony has studied the Bible, and believes that infant baptism is wrong, but Patrick has studied the Bible too, and believes that infant baptism is right.

Both are Christians with genuine faith, both prayed for guidance, both studied the Bible diligently, but they came to opposite conclusions.

So I ask them, how do you know you're right. Each one says they know because they feel the Holy Spirit has led them to their respective understandings, because they studied the Bible and prayed about it.

Let's put them in the same room and get each of them to try to persuade the other. Out come the Bibles, and they show each other their evidence. Neither is convinced. Out come the website links arguing each case. Out come the references to scholars who have also prayed, studied the Bible, and read the original Hebrew and Greek.

Neither is convinced. Each thinks that the Holy Spirit must have led them, because to them, their conclusions are so obvious from the pages of Scripture. Antony looks at Scripture and concludes that it says that infants should not be baptised, while Patrick looks at Scripture and concludes that it says infants can be baptised.

To what authority can Antony and Patrick turn to resolve their differences? Both might say that the only authority is the Bible and the Holy Spirit (actually two authorities.) But we've done that, and the Bible doesn't say "*Antony is right and Patrick is wrong*" anywhere, and the Holy Spirit has not intervened by appearing and stating which is correct. For Antony and Patrick, there seems to be only the subjective sense that the Holy Spirit has guided them to understand the Bible correctly. Is there an objective arbiter we can turn to?

One might suggest their pastors. But their pastors have the same authority as each other, and so we end up with Antony and a pastor against Patrick and a pastor.

Antony might turn to Ellen White or the 28 Fundamental Beliefs, the official creed of the Adventist church, while Patrick might turn to the Westminster Confession of Faith, a major doctrinal standard

of the Reformed Churches.

This is where things get a bit more subtle, and the distinction between **Sola Scriptura**, **Prima Scriptura**, and **Solo Scriptura** comes in. The Reformers came up with the concept of Sola Scriptura, basically meaning that the Bible contains all the knowledge we need for salvation and following God correctly. Sola Scriptura is a sort of middle ground between Prima Scriptura and Solo Scriptura. Solo Scriptura teaches that the Bible alone, without history or tradition, is our only source of truth. Prima Scriptura teaches that the Bible, along with tradition and reason, supply that truth, but the Bible has primacy over the others. Protestant churches are divided into these three camps, but typically most Protestants don't realise the distinction, and most likely Antony and possibly Patrick fall into the camp of Solo Scriptura – the Bible alone without reference to apostolic tradition and ecumenical councils like the Councils of Nicaea in 325 AD and 787 AD.

Where does the idea of Sola/Solo Scriptura come from? In short, from this passage:

2 Timothy 3:16-17 – All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

There are multiple problems with interpreting this verse in this way, which I will briefly summarise in a footnote.*

So what are the implications of the three variants of Sola Scriptura for Antony and Patrick?

Solo Scriptura – at first glance, the Bible alone sounds good. **But the problem is that the Bible doesn't provide a list of correct interpretations of what it says.** One can use one passage from the Bible to interpret another passage of Scripture, but what about in the case of Antony and Patrick? All they can do is go back and forth quoting different passages of the Bible to each other, with no objective authority other than themselves to arbitrate and inform them as to who is right.

Sola Scriptura and Prima Scriptura – the problem here lies with the nature of any extra-biblical authority that Antony or Patrick turn to. Both will probably trust their own pastors, but not each other's. Antony may recognise Ellen White as an authority to guide interpretation of Scripture, but Paul won't. Paul may refer to Luther and Calvin who both supported infant baptism, but Antony won't accept that because he feels his church has more revealed light than the original reformers had, as he thinks they had not completely come out of Babylon, although he thinks they had made good progress.

And there we get to the crux of the matter. **Whichever authority either Antony or Patrick turns to, the other is free to reject, because he feels his interpretation of Scripture is more in line with Scripture itself.** Antony will reject any authority that disagrees with him. Patrick is probably more Sola than Solo Scriptura, and will respect many Christian authorities as being guided by the Holy Spirit, but ultimately, if pressed, he would probably reject these authorities.

Most Adventists believe in the Trinity, that God is three persons in one being – the Father, the Son,

and the Holy Spirit. Some Adventists don't believe in the Trinity, however. Antony has a cousin, Alan, who is also Adventist. Unlike Antony, Alan has recently come to reject the doctrine of the Trinity. Let's put Alan into the same room as Antony and Patrick.

The topic of discussion changes to the Trinity. Antony was under the impression that the Trinity was found in the Bible. Patrick points out that this is correct, but not explicitly so. He says the teaching is found in the Bible but through proper interpretation, it can be explained. Alan disagrees, and says his interpretation is different – the Holy Spirit is just a force, and the Father and the Son are two separate beings. Patrick points out that early in Christian history, Christian leaders got together and debated and finally confirmed that the Trinity is official Christian doctrine. He says the Holy Spirit led them to this conclusion at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. Alan disagrees, and says that Patrick is following the traditions of men, that the Council of Nicaea had no authority from the Holy Spirit, and Christianity had already been corrupted by then. He says he used to accept the Trinity, but then he studied the Bible with an Armstrongite friend and decided it was wrong. Antony now sides with Patrick, and says that his study of the Bible has led him to believe in the Trinity.

What now?

Patrick respected the authority of the Christian leaders gathered together 1700 years ago, much like in Acts 15. But he realised that Alan is right – there is no authority that requires him to do so. At any point his study of the Bible could lead to a disagreement between his interpretation and the historical interpretation of the rest of Christianity. There was no biblical reason that keeps him bound to the Westminster Confession, or to the Council of Nicaea. There was not even a biblical reason to keep him bound to the New Testament itself – after all, the decision as to which first century writings were New Testament and what were not was made later, by some of the same people. The list of New Testament books is not even found in the Bible.

Antony and Alan continued to disagree about what the Bible said. The one said the Bible taught the Trinity, and the other said the Bible did not. **What they did not realise is that they were not differentiating between what the Bible said on the one hand, and their interpretation on the other. What they also did not realise was that they were not differentiating between an internal conviction that they were right on the one hand, and true leading of the Holy Spirit on the other – it's all a subjective feeling.** And even if they did manage to differentiate, they had no authority to tell them whose interpretation was the right one.

Alan even held the opinion that Christianity had become corrupt early on, and that the doctrines taught in 325 AD were false teachings. He thought original Christianity had gone under the radar, only to re-emerge hundreds of years later. He'd seen historical evidence that the Christians of 325 AD were very similar in their teachings to the Catholic Church, and concluded that they were therefore not the real Christian church.

The problems this case presents us with are many. I'll address a few.

First, we all think we're right. After studying the Bible and finding something particularly

notable, we all feel we've been moved by the Holy Spirit to see that. Antony felt moved like that when he studied baptism and concluded that infants should not be baptised. Patrick likewise felt that movement when he studied baptism and concluded that infants may be baptised. Both are internally convicted that the Holy Spirit has been leading them to their conclusions. Yet only one can be right. Neither of them can offer a final solution to resolving their dilemma. All they can do is say they are personally led by the Holy Spirit, while the other is not.

Second, there is no final authority to which Antony and Patrick can turn for an answer. They have only themselves. Any authority they can provide is considered non-authoritative by the other. As Antony claimed and as Patrick realised, any authority can be rejected in favour of one's own interpretation.

And that is the essence of Protestantism. The Bible alone without any interpreter that has clout. Luther rejected Catholic authority. John Smyth, the founder of the Baptists, rejected Luther's authority. Anyone, at any time, can reject any authority in favour of their own interpretation. **And that is why there are so many Protestant variants.**

Jesus founded a Church, so that Church has to be somewhere. Throughout Acts and the Epistles, we see that this Church had visible leaders. And they had clout.

No Protestant denomination today can claim to be the original visible Church, although they all claim to be part of the invisible Church. Where is the original visible Church that is continuous with the first century Church led by the Apostles? Or does it not matter? Did Jesus create a visible Church that continued to exist in all sorts of differing groups equally?

The Bible tells us that the Church is the pillar and foundation of truth.

1 Timothy 3:15 – But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

No, in this verse it is not God who is the pillar and ground of the truth. The cases of the nouns in the original Greek make the Church the pillar and ground of the truth.

Matthew 18:15-18 – Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

The Church Jesus founded has clout. It can make decisions. The Protestant denominations today may claim that clout over their members, but as we saw above, anyone is free to leave and determine their own doctrine – many have done so.

Protestant churches are – must be – fallible authorities that can be wrong. Certainly Antony and Alan believed that – they were their own authorities. **For Protestants, there are only fallible authorities, along with a subjective conviction** that the Holy Spirit guided them individually. For Antony, Alan, and Patrick, that inner feeling was all they had.

Is there an original Church? Or do 1 Tim 3:15 and Matt 18:17-18 have no modern Church that fulfils their role?

If we say *No*, then somehow Christ must have failed to leave us any certainty. If we say *Yes*, then where is it?

There are only two real options – the Catholic Church, or a hidden Church that existed unknown for centuries.

Let's briefly look at the two cases:

Option 1: Hidden Church unknown for centuries

Some claim that groups like the Albigensians and Waldenses and Paulicians etc. were this hidden Church. They carried the torch through the centuries under different names. Even Ellen White claimed this. The problem is that, if we used modern denominations as examples, it would be the same as claiming that the hidden Church carried the torch through the centuries in the form of Mormonism, Christian Science, Anglicans, and Pentecostals. Yes, the alleged true church groups were that radically different from each other. They believed things of this sort: two Gods, an evil God of the Old Testament, and a good God of the New Testament; marriage was sinful; ritual suicide ensured heaven; some sacraments came from their own priests, while others they got from Catholic priests; no forgiveness for sin was possible after baptism; etc. Even the Adventist Review acknowledges this problem (see Chapters 75 and 76 of this book).

If these were indeed the true Christians, then we have the following problems:

1. They got their list of New Testament books from the Catholics, and didn't fully know what was and wasn't Scripture for 2 centuries until then. Alternatively, God either inspired them to compile the correct list separately AND inspired the Catholics to do the same, or the Catholics got it right by accident.
2. Each group was doctrinally different from the others to an extent that makes it absurd.
3. History as we know it needs to be ignored, and rejected as false.
4. The true Church can then only be identified historically using a fictional history.

Option 2: The Catholic Church is the original

Historically, the Catholic and Orthodox Churches have the only historically supportable claim to be the original Christian Church. (If we use imaginary history, then Mormons and Albigensians and Herbert Armstrong may have a case.)

However, this is fraught with problems for Protestantism. And what makes it worse is that

Protestants (those in the Sola / Prima Scriptura camps) cite Catholic authorities as valid authorities. For example, the Council of Nicaea, the Council of Chalcedon, the Council of Ephesus, etc.

Many Protestants are unaware that there are many writings that survive from the early Church. The Early Church Fathers, and in particular, the Ante-Nicene Fathers, are a very interesting read. They give us the context of Christianity in the first few centuries. And the disturbing thing for Protestants is that they were thoroughly Catholic. In fact, this is one of the big things that leads people to the Catholic faith – that the earliest historical writings of Christians immediately after the New Testament were Catholic in theology. (Go and read [A Protestant Historian Discovers the Catholic Church](#) by Dr A David Anders).

The first complete list of New Testament writings comes from people who:

1. Believed in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist
2. Believed in a sacramental priesthood in addition to the priesthood of all believers
3. Believed in prayer for the dead
4. Believed in prayer to saints and angels
5. Believed Mary was a perpetual Virgin, the New Eve, the Mother of the Church
6. Observed Sunday as the principal day of worship (typically Christians celebrated the Eucharist every day, with Sunday as a special day, and often with the 7th day sabbath as a fast commemorating the day Jesus was in the tomb. See the full quote from Socrates that Adventists won't show you in Chapter 45 of this book)
7. Many other specifically Catholic teachings

These Catholic bishops finalised the New Testament Canon based on those books generally accepted by them and their predecessors to be authentic Apostolic heritage, suitable for reading publicly in their churches.

Protestants considering the Councils of Nicaea, Chalcedon, and Ephesus to be authoritative are really just selective in their application – the bishops of these councils:

1. Believed in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist
2. Believed in a sacramental priesthood in addition to the priesthood of all believers
3. Believed in prayer for the dead
4. Believed in prayer to saints and angels
5. Believed Mary was a perpetual Virgin, the New Eve, the Mother of the Church
6. Observed Sunday as the principal day of worship
7. Many other specifically Catholic teachings

The same St Athanasius who defended the doctrine of the Trinity was a Catholic bishop to the core. The very disciples of the Apostle John – St Ignatius and St Polycarp – were Sunday keepers who believed in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. St Ignatius' disciple, St Irenaeus, wrote a lengthy treatise on the Virgin Mary. The same St Augustine who inspired Luther taught Catholic doctrine about purgatory, Mary, the Eucharist, and much, much more.

Ultimately there are three roads to take –

1. The authority of the early Church vanished and we have no certain guide today other than our own conviction that the Holy Spirit leads us; none of us can know with any certainty that we're right because the next person feels exactly the same way; the only resolution to this is to accept that there is no authoritative doctrine today, or else wait for the Holy Spirit to publicly say who is right, which hasn't happened in a while;
2. There is an authoritative Church today that cannot be proven using legitimate historical sources; in this case we can make up any doctrine and claim it to be the teaching of the original Christians, as Mormonism and Armstrongism do;
3. The original Christians were Catholic, and their collective legacy shows where we can turn for authoritative answers.

Further reading:

- I highly recommend you go and download and/or listen to [What Did the Early Church Look Like? \(Encore\)](#) ... by Steve Ray at Catholic Answers.
- [A Quick Ten-Step Refutation of Sola Scriptura](#) ... by Dave Armstrong
- [Twenty One Reasons to Reject Sola Scriptura](#) ... by Joel Peters
- [“What’s Your Authority?”](#) ... Catholic Answers
- [Did the Early Christians Subscribe to Sola Scriptura?](#) ... by Jennifer Hay
- [The Great Uncertainty – Problems with Individual Fallibility](#) ... by Adam N. Crawford

*Footnote:

Interpreting 2 Tim 3:16-17 as teaching Sola Scriptura is problematic as follows: First, the translation doesn't reflect the Greek nuances. “All” means “every” – and we know that each and every verse in the Bible does not stand on its own as a single authority. So we could put in a subset of Scripture here and say “*All four Gospels are given by inspiration of God, and are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*” – and this would still be correct, but the language would not limit us to the four Gospels. Second, the word “only” is not found in this passage at all. Third, what is profitable is not necessarily sufficient. Titus 3:8 uses the same word to describe good works, and which Protestant will agree that good works are sufficient? The Greek word means advantageous, useful, profitable, but not sufficient. Water is advantageous, useful, profitable, as well as necessary for us to survive, but it is not sufficient – we need food and shelter also. Fourth, the Bible did not exist in its current form in the first few centuries of Christianity. The Gospels and Epistles and Revelation circulated among Christians and were read in their liturgies, but they circulated with other books like Hermas and Clement and Barnabas, and there was no final decision regarding which were truly Scripture until the 300s AD. Interpreting this verse to mean Sola Scriptura was simply not part of early Christian teaching.

Section 8: Christian holy days

Chapter 84: Christian holy days - a gift to Jesus

Adventists, and others, dislike the way the Catholic Church has set aside various days of the year for celebrating Jesus Christ. They label such things as “*pagan*” even if they aren’t pagan at all. (The word “*pagan*” is a synonym for “*Catholic*” amongst many of this crowd, irrespective of actual religious origins of any practice or teaching.)

One argument they use is that nowhere in the Bible are we instructed to celebrate Jesus’ life.

This reminds me of the anointing of Jesus by Mary with expensive ointment.

John 12:1-8 – Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.

Nowhere in the Bible did it tell Mary to do this. Jesus never instructed her to do this. Yet she did it as a gift to him, from her heart.

Christians are not bound to any of the Israelite holy days, which prefigured Christ. We are free to, from our heart, give to Jesus what he hasn’t asked for. By setting days for commemorating Jesus’ birth, death, resurrection, his baptism, his ascension into heaven, and other aspects of his life, Christians long ago gave worship to God, and we still have those celebrations today.

Nothing in the Bible says we may not do so. May God bless you as we prepare for the celebration of Jesus’ birth.

Chapter 85: Christmas is Christian

At this time of the year, when Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, and the Incarnation of God the Son in human form, scoffers appear. I don't blame atheists for not celebrating Christmas, but it is surprising, and sad, to find groups who claim to be Christian but shun the celebration of God the Son becoming Man.

Adventists are amongst these. Some Adventists celebrate Christmas, some don't. Ellen White did. Many Herbert Armstrong derivatives don't. Nor do Jehovah's Witnesses. Those who don't rely on two key arguments:

- 1) it's not commanded in the Bible, and no permission is given to do so, and
- 2) misinformation.

Part 1: No command / permission

#1 is easy to show the foolishness of. Most of these anti-Christmas people use flushing toilets, the electric telephone, and even the internet. Those aren't in the Bible either, and no permission is given in the Bible to use them.

Do we need permission to hold a celebration of one of the most important events in human history? Did the Magi need to find permission in the Bible to track Jesus down and present him with gifts – the very first Christmas presents? Did the angels need to find permission in the Bible to rejoice in heaven?

Do Adventists (and others) find biblical instructions to have their pot-luck events? Do Adventists (and others) find any biblical command to have their sabbath services in the morning rather than in the evening (as in Acts 20)?

Why the hesitancy to celebrate something as important as Jesus' birth?

Think about it this way:

If an Adventist group decided that they felt strongly that they identified with the feeding of the 5000 by Jesus, and they decided they would celebrate this once a year with a huge pot-luck ... would the Adventist hierarchy tell them to stop, because it wasn't commanded in the Bible?

Or this way:

1. Assume that the Catholic Church didn't exist.
2. If we assume that, then there would be no reason to reject things because they were Catholic.
3. Under such circumstances, would there be any real opposition to a proposal to celebrate Jesus' birth by a first century Protestant / Adventist / Jehovah's Witness?

I answer **No**. I think the underlying reason for most of these groups objecting to Christmas is that it is associated with Catholicism, which they hate. That it's not expressly commanded in the Bible is

just an excuse.

In the Old Covenant, God specified when and how worship occurred, the dates, the animals to be sacrificed, and so forth.

In the New Covenant, we are not given those prescriptions. Instead of God telling us what to do, he now wants us to offer to him our own love for him ... and that is why we have the freedom to adopt the day Jesus rose from the dead instead of the Jewish sabbath, to celebrate Jesus' resurrection annually as well as weekly instead of the Passover, to celebrate Jesus' birth. And so, from the earliest Christian times, that is how the Christians did things.

They turned the important events in Jesus' life into weekly and yearly celebrations.

Some Adventists, and others, tend to spurn these events, and either look the other way or denigrate them.

Romans 14 says that whatever day we use to worship God, we honour God by doing so, and those who cannot stomach that sort of thing are weak in their faith.

Part 2: Misinformation

I've said most of what I wanted to say. I'll keep the next section brief, and provide five links below that will take you to a more detailed look at why the false historical claims made by some Adventists and others are indeed false.

In short, the accusations are these:

1. Christmas is derived from Saturnalia and the winter equinox.
2. Christmas is derived from the celebration of the birth of Sol Invictus. (Yes, it's derived from two different events, depending on who is making the claim.)
3. We don't know when Jesus was born, and it wasn't in December in winter.
4. Christmas trees are forbidden in the Bible, and were adopted from the use of pagan Yuletide trees.

The answers to these:

1. Saturnalia started and ended before 25 December. The winter equinox ended Saturnalia, two days before Christmas. If Christians wanted to use the date for Saturnalia, they could have asked anyone in the street. Also, Saturnalia and Christmas do not share the same religious themes. And lastly, at a when Christians were particularly averse to doing things that may possibly have resembled paganism, it doesn't make sense that they would adopt a pagan festival in the way the anti-Christmas crowd claim they did.

2. The celebration of the birth of Sol Invictus (the invincible sun) was once thought to pre-date the celebration of Christmas, and so some thought that Christians chose the same date to replace it with a celebration of the birth of the true sun of righteousness (i.e. Jesus; Malachi 4:2). It is now known

that the Sol Invictus celebration came into being at least a century **after** the first documented evidence for celebrating the birth of Jesus, and it came into existence as part of an anti-Christian sentiment in the Roman government ... so the Romans adopted the date from the Christians, not the other way around.

3a. The date of 25 December is calculated from the evidence given in the Bible about Elizabeth's pregnancy with John the Baptist. The timing of her pregnancy can be calculated from the information given about Zachariah's service in the temple. With that information, it was determined that John the Baptist was conceived in September, and therefore born in June. Mary visited Elizabeth shortly after conceiving Jesus, and that was when Elizabeth was 6 months pregnant, i.e. in March. So if Mary conceived in March, Jesus would have been born in December.

3b. It was a pious Jewish belief, which early Christians considered relevant, that important people's lives began and ended on the same day of the year. So the early Christians knew that Jesus died at the end of March, which means that his conception must have been at the end of March too ... again making Jesus' birth happen at the end of December.

3c. Winter? Snow? Too cold? The world was warmer back then – historians record vineyards growing in northern parts of Europe where it is too cold for them today. And even today, there are sheep out in the fields in Israel in December (special sheep for religious purposes.)

4. The origin of the Christmas tree comes from the German celebration of Adam and Eve on 24 December. Remember the story? There was a tree in paradise. Fir trees were well known to the Germans, so they used fir trees as the tree in paradise. Tree baubles? They represented the fruit on the tree. Later this was suppressed, and the tree moved to the following day.

Further reading:

[Adam, Eve and the Christmas Tree](#) ... by Margaret Rose Realy

[Yes, Christ Was Really Born on December 25](#) ... by Taylor Marshall

[How December 25 Became Christmas](#) ... by Andrew McGowan

[Christmas, Pagan Romans, & Frodo Baggins](#) ... by Fr Dwight Longenecker

[Christmas Was Never a Pagan Holiday](#) ... by Marian T Horvat

Chapter 86: Is Easter Pagan?

Adventists, and others such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and those groups continuing Herbert Armstrong's legacy, often claim that Easter is derived from a pagan festival. In fact, there are two important points to raise in response to them – a) whether or not Easter is pagan, and, for the Armstrong followers, b) which days of the week the Crucifixion and Resurrection were. The latter will have to wait for now.

What about Easter has pagan origins?

The intention of Christians is to celebrate the resurrection of Christ. Nothing pagan about that. Unless you reject the entire Christian religion as just copying paganism (and there are good arguments why that is wrong which I won't go into here.)

Did Christians adopt Easter from pagans? Did they Christianise an existing pagan fertility festival and adapt it to celebrate Christ's resurrection? No. There is nothing pagan about the timing of the celebration of Easter. It's all based on the Old Testament which sets the times for Passover, and there are several New Testament statements that would contribute to determining the time.

The name “*Easter*”? Probably not pagan in origin at all, and even if it is, this criticism only applies in English-speaking and German-speaking communities. All other Christian cultures use different words, not of pagan origin, and mostly derived from the Hebrew “*Pesach*”. To condemn Easter as pagan because the name “*Easter*” is pagan would ignore most of the Christian world for 2000 years, who have never used that pagan name as a reference to this celebration, and who got their dates for the celebration from the Jews. Stop the use of the word “*Easter*” in English and German communities, and they can just go back to using a word based on the Hebrew. Pascha. That's the term the Catholic Church uses. It's Latin, and derived from Hebrew. So certainly the Catholic Church cannot be accused of celebrating a holiday with a pagan name – neither English nor German is the official language of the Catholic Church.

And is the word “*Easter*” of pagan origin at all? It may be, but it is seriously doubted by many. The existence of a pagan goddess called Eostre ultimately depends on one single source – the Venerable Bede. There is significant doubt that he got his facts right, and good reason to believe that there was no such goddess, or that her name was something else.

It is equally likely that the word “*Easter*” comes from an Old High Germanic word for dawn. In the Latin Church, newly baptised Christians wore white (“*in albis*”) during the week after Pascha. The term “*white week*” developed from this practice, and today we still talk about the Sunday after Pascha as “*White Sunday*” – the Sunday when the white robes, a week after Pascha, were removed and normal clothes resumed. This practice arrived in Germany, and the Germans saw the word “*albis*” and thought it was the plural of “*alba*”, which is another Latin word entirely, but which means “*dawn*.” A not entirely illogical conclusion if one is not completely literate in Latin, and if one realises that the Bible shows that Jesus rose from the dead early on the Sunday morning, it's very easy to make that mistake. So, the Germans thought “*white week*” referred to the resurrection

at/before dawn, and so they simply used their own word for dawn – “*eostarum*”. This word comes from the same Proto-Germanic word that eventually became our English word “*east*” – where the sun rises at dawn. And hence “*Easter*” followed from “*eostarum*”. (On the other hand, although yeast rises, the word “*yeast*” comes from a completely different root.)

There is yet another theory that the word comes from the one of the Teutonic words “*auferstehung*” or “*erstehen*” which mean resurrection. In South Africa we’re lucky enough to have many languages, and those who understand Afrikaans will see the etymological links there. *Eerste* = first. *Stehen* is a little less clear, but means to stand up. What did Jesus do first thing in the morning on the first day of the week? He stood up. Simple. Auferstehung! Erstellen! Resurrection!

Is there anything wrong with using a standard word from German, or any other language, that may or may not have had, in the even more distant past, origins that may or may not be vaguely connected to paganism? Hardly ... otherwise in English we would also have to stop the use of the words God, Amen, holy, Monday, and medicine.

So why do we celebrate the resurrection of Christ when we do?

According to the New Testament, the resurrection of Christ took place on the first day of the week (Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-12, Luke 24:21,46). So, when that time of year came round again and Christians wished to celebrate the Resurrection annually, it would be natural that some would choose a Friday/Saturday/Sunday on which to do it. After all, there is a lot of symbolism in Jesus’ being in the tomb, resting, on the sabbath, and even more symbolism in his rising after his rest the next day. The old creation was restored and turned into the new (2 Corinthians 5:17). God rested after the initial creation (Genesis 2:2). That creation turned to sin (Genesis 3). Christ restored the balance in a life-long event that that ended in his death and resurrection, resulting in a new creation, enabling us to be part of that new creation (Colossians 3:9-10, 2 Corinthians 5:17) and have our relationship with God restored. One week ends with Jesus in the tomb; the next week begins with him rising out of the tomb. One might not agree with the symbolism, but tell that to the people who, in those early centuries, wanted to celebrate this amazing event every year. Right or wrong, the symbolism is not pagan; it’s applied from the Bible. Early Christian writers attribute this practice to the Apostles Peter and Paul, and it became the predominant timing of the celebration in the west, and later throughout the Christian world.

Some early Christians thought differently, and followed a practice attributed to the Apostle John (I recall it being attributed to John as well as Andrew or Philip but I can’t find anything about that now). By the time we reach 160 AD we see a dispute arising between the two parties – one, following Peter and Paul, having Pascha on a Sunday, and the other, following John, celebrating Jesus’ death on 14 Nisan and resurrection on 16 Nisan, with the focus more on Jesus’ death correlating with the Passover (hence the name Quartodeciman – 10+4=14.) Polycarp, one of John’s disciples, met with Pope Anicetus, bishop of Rome, and discussed their different practices. They departed unable to convince each other to change, but happy to keep their respective practices and respect each other’s. (Much like modern Catholics, who celebrate Pascha at different times – most with the Western date, but some, with the go-ahead from Rome, with the Orthodox. In fact, all of

Israeli Catholics – Latin rite and Eastern rite – will celebrate Pascha on the Orthodox date from 2015.) Eventually the Quartodeciman controversy unfortunately became less civil, and the minority Quartodeciman practice died out.

Calculation of the date of Pascha

This is a complex topic better suited for the thesis for a PhD in calendrical mathematics, so I will be brief here. Initially the date was simple. Jesus died on 14 Nisan (or 15 Nisan, depending on which scholars you ask.) Jesus rose from the dead on the Sunday after 14/15 Nisan. That was the Sunday during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Therefore the Christians looked to see when the Jews observed Passover, figured out which Sunday fell in the week after Passover, and then they knew which day they would use. Later the Christians objected to being dependent on the Jews for determining a Christian date, and objected to the fact that the Jews sometimes got it wrong. Simply put, Nisan was supposed to start with the new moon after equinox, but that didn't always happen, so in 325 AD the Christians dropped their dependence on the Jews, and calculated for themselves when Pascha should occur. Their calculations were not always accurate either, but at least they were united. A simple formula for calculating Pascha today is as follows: **Pascha Sunday is the first Sunday after the first full moon on or after the March equinox.** Keep in mind that the March equinox is set at 21 March because that was the date of equinox in 325 AD; actual astronomical equinox is usually on 20 March these days. Also note that the full moon is also determined by calculation, and not by astronomical determination or by visual sighting of the full moon or new moon. Clearly, there was no pagan practice involved here that needed Christianisation. It is worth noting that the Council of Nicaea that decided on the date for Pascha was particularly averse to things that even looked pagan or was contrary to established Christian practice and thought. Christianity at that time did not like to adopt external non-Christian practices – much to the amazement of anti-Catholics of today. Of note is the Council's decision to ban kneeling between Pascha and Pentecost – canon 20 states: *“Forasmuch as there are certain persons who kneel on the Lord's Day and in the days of Pentecost, therefore, to the intent that all things may be uniformly observed everywhere (in every parish), it seems good to the holy Synod that prayer be made to God standing.”* The pagan Byzantines and Christians had very different ideas about kneeling, and some Christians wanted to avoid that, while some had no problem with it because pagan nonsense was irrelevant to them. Kneeling during the Eucharistic liturgy was therefore scrapped in 325 AD, and this practice remains prominent in the Eastern Catholic and Orthodox Churches – some do allow it in modern times, when the memory of the Councils reasoning had faded, but they still maintain the stricter practice of no kneeling between Pascha and Pentecost.

Easter customs

Various customs have developed over time amongst Christians, and Easter eggs and the Easter bunny are two of those often noted for their pagan origin. That is fine, but they are only of peripheral importance to the Pascha celebration, and were added much later. If they are indeed pagan – and there is good reason to doubt this – then they certainly cannot invalidate the actual core celebration of Pascha. Throw away the eggs – they just make people fat. Throw away the rabbits (not live ones, that's cruel.) In most modern Christian cultures, there is little significance found in

these things anyway – it's commercialism, only on a lesser scale than Christmas. Either way, the Resurrection of Christ remains the centre of Pascha celebrations.

Easter eggs first appear in Christian history in the Middle East, where Christians dyed eggs red as a sign of Christ's blood. Dyeing or painting eggs can be found in many cultures, many of which were pagan. It is therefore easy to claim, without much effort, that Easter eggs were a pagan custom adopted by Christians.

However, eggs can also be found in Jewish culture, and long ago, as well as today, eggs were traditionally brought to funerals and gatherings of mourners. There is a pious legend that Mary Magdalene brought such eggs to the tomb for the mourners to eat on the morning of Jesus' resurrection – the eggs turned red as a sign of Jesus' blood. There is no historical evidence to support that, however, but it does show that eggs and Jewish customs need to be taken into account when judging whether or not Easter eggs come from paganism, or from Jewish culture. Given the geographic origins of Easter eggs, this suggested origin is far from unlikely.

Easter bunnies? – no, Eostre / Ishtar / Astarte / *<whatever name you choose>* was not symbolised by a rabbit. The evidence for that is incredibly specious – relying in embellishments of embellishments of one single dubious source – Bede. That the egg custom did not begin in the geographical regions of either Eostre or any rabbit goddess just shows how desperate the anti-Pascha arguments have become, having to join together bits of mythology unrelated geographically or historically in order to arrive at an accusation. The most likely reason that rabbits entered the Pascha picture is because hares (which look like rabbits) were thought to lay eggs by some in early times. No, they don't really lay eggs. Unlike rabbits, hares nest above ground in grass or depressions in the ground. Plovers, which are birds and do lay eggs, often take over these hare nests after the hares are finished with them, and lay their eggs there. People without degrees in biology, or without even high school biology, sometimes reached the conclusion that these eggs were from the hares. Hence the mistaken idea that hares lay eggs. And so the link between eggs in spring (Pascha time) and rabbits. It may be erroneous, but it's not pagan. Another theory is that in ancient times, people thought hares were hermaphrodites, and could therefore have babies without mating with another hare. So, mistaken biology led people to use the hare as a sign of the Virgin Mary, who had Jesus without a human father. Mistaken biology is not the same thing as paganism. There are very good reasons to believe that Easter eggs and Easter bunnies grew out of early Christian culture and Jewish culture of the time. We can't blame them for their lack of biology – St Augustine thought that maggots and flies developed *de novo* from rotting meat. We can say they had strange ideas about biology, but we can't blame them for adopting pagan practices when the evidence is as specious as it really is.

Fertility symbols are widespread, and encompass a huge range of animals, plants, and other natural elements. There is little solid ground on which to stand when accusing Christians of adopting fertility symbols when it comes to Pascha. In fact, there is more solid evidence to link the original Passover and Feast of Unleavened bread to contemporaneous Babylonian spring pre-harvest festivals, and similarly later in the year with post-harvest festivals (Sukkot). Just because there is pre-Mosaic evidence of such festivals in the Semitic cultures does not mean that it was wrong for

the Israelites to have similar events decreed for them to observe by God. After all, harvest festivals are obvious – so just because pagans thanked their gods for the harvest, doesn't mean God's people shouldn't thank him for theirs.

So it is with Christianity. We didn't go around adopting pagan holidays and pagan customs and pagan beliefs. Ours developed as natural expressions of the Christian faith, and originated in Judaism where there was an origin outside of Christianity. Similarity to pagan customs does not mean that we adopted them from pagans any more than it means the Israelites adopted their practices from pagans.

So, should Adventists celebrate the Resurrection of Christ? Yes. It's a celebration that dates back to the earliest Christians. Should they do so on Pascha Sunday? Why not? The paganism claim is patently false. [Even the pagans are fed up with the claim that Easter is pagan!](#)

Yes, to us, Pascha is Catholic, but it does date back to the earliest Christians, whom Adventists don't recognise as Catholic (even though their beliefs and practices were). Celebrating Easter Sunday has nothing to do with Eostre or Ishtar, but everything to do with when and how and why Jesus rose from the dead.

Some Adventists recognise this truth. Some don't, but use their celebration of Easter as a tool to spread their beliefs to other Christians. Some don't celebrate Easter at all. These Adventists should reevaluate their rejection of Easter and cast aside their preconceptions that anything Catholic must be bad.

Dr Samuele Bacchiocchi, a famous Adventist scholar, is one example of an Adventist who rejects the celebration of Easter. His arguments are very interesting, as they highlight the mistakes typical of how historical evidence can be misused in order to create a false impression about something. I've dealt with his arguments in the next chapter.

Further reading / references:

[8 things you need to know about Easter Sunday](#) ... by Jimmy Akin

[Is Easter a Pagan Holiday?](#) ... by Jimmy Akin

[Is Easter Pagan?](#) ... by Jimmy Akin

[Is Easter Pagan?](#) ... by Jimmy Akin on YouTube

[Easter Is Not Named After Ishtar, And Other Truths I Have To Tell You](#)

[Is the Name "Easter" of Pagan Origin?](#) ... by Roger Patterson

Chapter 87: Is Easter Christian? A reply to Samuele Bacchiocchi

The late Adventist scholar Dr Samuele Bacchiocchi was influenced by the teachings of Herbert Armstrong, and promoted the observance of Jewish holy days instead of Christian holy days. In his Endtime Issues #43 he rearranges the historical evidence to form a revised version of history to support his arguments. He beautifully provides us with a typical example of how historical evidence is misapplied.

For a more complete and general look at whether or not Easter is pagan, see Chapter 86.

Bacchiocchi wrote that the Council of Nicaea rejected the celebration of Passover, suppressing it in favour of Pascha Sunday. In doing so he makes numerous errors. All quotes below are from his Endtime Issues #43.

What most Christians ignore is that Passover was changed to Easter Sunday for the same reasons that the Sabbath was changed to Sunday.

Well, the sabbath was never changed to Sunday to begin with. Christians, from the first century, recorded by the Apostles' own disciples, began observing Sunday weekly because a) the sabbath was no longer relevant to Christians, and b) Jesus rose from the dead that day. And so, yes, eventually Passover observance was universally changed from 14 Nisan to the Sunday during Passover week.

Perhaps the most explicit and forceful expression of anti-Judaism for the repudiation of the traditional Passover dating is found in the letter that Emperor Constantine formulated at the Council of Nicea in A. D. 325.

Anti-Judaism of this nature is found right throughout the New Testament. Sacrifices were no longer observed by Christians, circumcision was declared to be no longer necessary, the laws of Moses were no longer necessary. These changes were implemented by the Apostles for the same reason that they chose to celebrate Jesus' resurrection annually on the Sunday during Passover week. If putting side things that were no longer necessary for Christians is anti-Judaism, then so be it – all these things in the New Testament and afterwards must then be called expressions of anti-Judaism. I think a better term is pro-Christian, because mostly it was not an attempt to reject Judaism, but rather an application of what was still relevant to their relationship with Christ.

In desiring to establish a religion completely free from any Jewish influence, the emperor wrote regarding Passover: "It appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast we should follow the practice of the Jews, who have impiously defiled their hands with enormous sin, and are, therefore, deservedly afflicted with blindness of soul. . . . Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd: for we have received from our Savior a different way. . . . Strive and pray continually that the purity of your soul may not seem in anything to be sullied by fellowship with the custom of these most wicked men. . . . All should unite in desiring

that which sound reason appears to demand, avoiding all participation in the perjured conduct of the Jews.”

The Quartodeciman practice had been largely abolished decades previously, although a small group continued with the practice. It was this small group’s practice that the Council of Nicaea decided should no longer be continued. The established Pascha on the Sunday of Passover week was the practice throughout Christianity, with only a small group in Asia Minor doing otherwise. What the council did was to put an end to minor arguments still going on.

The Council of Nicea (A. D. 325) put an end to the controversy over the date of Passover by decreeing that it should be celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon of spring.

Now Bacchiocchi is mixing things up a little. Yes, the Council of Nicaea, like the Council of Jerusalem before it, made a decision regarding what was to be normal practice. But there were two controversies, and the council reached two decisions, and Bacchiocchi is not making that distinction, and his text therefore reads as if the date of Easter were, for the first time, decided at this council. The one controversy was Quartodecimanism, practised in a region in Asia Minor. The other controversy was about the date of the Christian Pascha Sunday. These were two separate issues.

The second controversy, the one regarding how to decide which Sunday was to be kept as Pascha Sunday, was a series of disagreements that arose amongst those who all kept Pascha Sunday – it was not a disagreement between Passover observers vs Pascha Sunday observers at all. The disagreement was over whether or not to rely on the Jews’ determination of the date of Passover when determining which Sunday was to be kept as Pascha Sunday. The Jews occasionally got the date of Passover wrong, in the eyes of Christian calendrists, and so the debate was whether or not to follow the Jews when they made such errors, or whether to calculate the date for themselves.

To ensure that Easter-Sunday would never be celebrated at the same time as the Jewish Passover, the council decreed that if the 14th of Nisan fell on a Sunday, then Easter was to be celebrated on the following Sunday.

There was nothing anti-Jewish about this part of the decision. If Jesus was crucified on 14 Nisan, it would be irrational to celebrate his resurrection on the same day. So, logically, if 14 Nisan was a Sunday, then the Sunday in Passover week (the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which would have begun on the Monday) would have to be the following Sunday.

Nicaea represents the culmination of the Passover controversy initiated two centuries earlier and motivated by strong anti-Judaic feelings.

There were two controversies regarding the date. Don’t forget that.

Unfortunately, the controversy was “settled” at Nicea, not Biblically but politically.

It was settled by a council of all the elders called to one place to discuss problems that arose within

the Church. Exactly the same happened in Acts 15 at the Council of Jerusalem. The Council of Nicaea may not have been Bacchiocchi's idea of a biblical decision (i.e. studying the Bible outside of its original context and forming a personal fallible opinion) but it certainly followed biblical example. Two equally ancient practices existed side by side, with historical evidence going back to show that the immediate successors to the Apostles knew that the Apostles began these practices. In the beginning there was no problem, but when tension arose, it was necessary to make a decision one way or the other.

It was settled by suppressing the traditional observance of Passover and by adopting instead Easter-Sunday as championed by the church of Rome.

There was no traditional observance of Passover by Christians. There was a small group of Quartodecimans in Asia Minor, and there was the majority who celebrated Pascha Sunday. Pascha Sunday was not an innovation coming from the church of Rome – it was an ancient practice linked to Rome by the fact that Peter and Paul established the practice, according to the earliest historians based on the witness of the contemporaries of the Apostles, and Peter and Paul happened to end up in Rome and were martyred there.

Summing up, the celebration of Christ's resurrection on the weekly Sunday and annual Easter Sunday is a post-apostolic phenomenon, devoid of biblical support. These festivals were introduced to enable Gentile Christians to show separation and differentiation from the Jews and identification with the Roman society. What most Christians ignore is that the adoption of weekly Sunday and Easter Sunday was motivated more by hate for the Jews than love for Jesus Christ. It was because of expediency rather than obedience to God's commandments.

Summing up, the historical evidence shows that people who knew the Apostles attributed two different practices to them – one practice coming from Peter and Paul, another coming from John. These two practices existed in harmony for nearly a century, after which tensions arose and the minority practice in a region in Asia Minor was eventually stopped. Neither of these two practices enabled Gentile Christians to show separation and differentiation from the Jews any more than the New Testament's abolition of circumcision, the laws of Moses, the Levitical priesthood, etc. In no way did celebrating Christ's resurrection allow Christians to be more able to identify with Roman society. What Bacchiocchi is ignoring is that the early Christians followed the practices of the Apostles, or at least what the Apostles' disciples claimed were the practices of the Apostles, and were not a religion dominated by hatred of Jews. When no commandments of God instruct Christians to keep Passover or Unleavened Bread or Yom Kippur or Hannukah, one cannot blame Christians for finding the most practical way to celebrate Christ's resurrection while trying to remain faithful to those Christ left to lead the Church.

One could just as easily say that Bacchiocchi's arguments, and his revisionist history, are motivated by the prominent Adventist need to seem less Catholic, to show separation and differentiation from Catholic practice, and thus they are more expedient than following the examples set by the Apostles and those who led the Church in the decades – and eventually centuries – after the Apostles died. For Pascha Sunday, or Easter Sunday, is in no way pagan in origin, and certainly not demonstrably

pagan in its English/German names, and is indeed a practice that has sound historical evidence dating to as far back as 115 AD, celebrated by people who knew the Apostles themselves.

In arguing this way, Bacchiocchi is actually encouraging a form of Christianity disconnected from, and not more in line with, early Christian practice and teaching. The writings of many early Christians survive, and it's not hard to show that their teachings and practices were thoroughly Catholic. The only way to separate oneself from the Catholic nature of the first few centuries of Christianity is to reject the historical record right back to the first century, and then to make up one's own history. I'd recommend reading the Early Church Fathers, starting with the Didache, Barnabas, Papias, Hermas, Clement of Rome, Ignatius, and Polycarp, and moving on to Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, and Tertullian – the [entire series is available at this link](#).

While the Christian world celebrates the Christ's resurrection liturgically through a church service, Seventh-day Adventists can capitalize on this occasion by reflecting on the personal, existential meaning of the resurrection. The seven points represent a summary of a sermon I was invited to preach on what the resurrection means to me.

Oh, if only Bacchiocchi had actually asked other Christians what the Resurrection meant to them instead of making assumptions about other Christians and liturgical worship that were incorrect.

Chapter 88: Christian Halloween

No, Halloween is NOT a pagan holiday adopted by Catholics and passed on to Protestants. That's a myth perpetuated by anti-Catholics and those who, contrary to the Bible, fear what has been offered to pagan gods.

It began as a Christian celebration of all the saints of the Church who didn't have their own feast days.

In the 300s AD, Christians honoured those martyred by the Roman Emperors on 13 May, or the Friday after Easter, or the first Sunday after Pentecost.

When Pope Boniface IV rededicated the pagan Pantheon (the building) to St Mary and All the Martyrs in 609 AD, he probably did so on that date because that is when a large portion of Christians honoured the martyrs.

In the 8th century, Pope Gregory III established 1 November as a day of honouring martyrs in Rome when he dedicated the All Saints Chapel in St Peter's Basilica in Rome.

Later the Roman date became universal, under Pope Gregory IV, and came to include saints who were not martyrs. And then a 2nd day was added for those not explicitly named as saints – All Souls Day.

Like all the important feasts of the Church, the celebration of the feast began the night before. Easter – we have the Easter Vigil. Christmas, we have the Christmas Vigil, before Midnight Mass. We have the Vigil of the Assumption, the Vigil of Saints Simon and Jude, etc. The Anglicans, Lutherans, and Methodists also have vigil services.

So, All Saints on 1 November makes the vigil in the evening of 31 October. And already, by connecting historical facts, we find 31 October as a vigil for All Saints without having to resort to the common misconception that it was a pagan celebration that Christians took over.

Halloween = hallow + evening. Hallow = holy, cf. saints. The vigil of All Saints became, in English, Halloween.

Dressing up? This came from a French custom unrelated to Halloween, but linked to All Souls Day. Eventually it was linked to Halloween in the 1700s in North America, when French culture and Irish culture mixed. The Irish, but not the French, celebrated Halloween. So add the French dressing up for 2 November, with the Irish celebrating their vigil on 31 October, and you get an American custom of dressing up for Halloween. In South Africa, where we have 11 official languages, we'd call it a "rainbow" custom, a fusion of aspects of two cultures. Religious in origin, mostly secular in practice these days.

And so, like Adventism, Jehovah's Witnessism, and Mormonism, the American custom spread to the rest of the world. While Adventism, Jehovah's Witnessism, and Mormonism might be belief

systems contrary to the Bible and foreign to the original Christians, Halloween today is a harmless practice that has a combination of Catholic and American origins.

And if you don't believe that? Then turn to the Bible.

1 Corinthians 10:25 – [Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake.](#)

When people came asking if they could, in good conscience, eat meat that may have been sacrificed to false gods, Paul said Yes. Christians are free to do so. Some Christians, whom Paul calls weak (cf. Romans 14), think they need to avoid meat and eat only vegetables, and they think they need to keep the sabbath. Paul says we should tolerate their weakness with love, and not be the source of their sin. But Paul says there is nothing that is unclean of itself.

The same principle that Paul applied to the sabbath and to food can be applied to Halloween. Keep the good, omit the bad.

So, in reality, Halloween is a safe and fun secular practice with Christian origins. If you don't believe that, or dislike the type of Christian faith it originated in, follow Paul's advice. If you don't feel you can go that far yet, don't complain about those who have a stronger faith.

And enjoy the sweets.

Further reading:

[All Saints and All Souls](#), by Fr. William Saunders

[Halloween : From Pagan Ritual to Party Night](#), by Nicholas Rogers

[The Catholic Origins of Halloween](#), by Father Augustine Thompson, O.P.

[Surprise: Halloween's Not a Pagan Festival After All](#), by Father Augustine Thompson, O.P.

Respice post te! Hominem te esse memento! Memento mori!

Section 9: Guest posts on an Adventist blog

I wrote two guest posts on a blog called Reinventing the Adventist Wheel. I'm including them here.

Chapter 89: God's visible grace

Guest post at the blog [Reinventing the Adventist Wheel](#).

I've been invited to be an occasional contributor to this blog, as a Catholic who has a website/blog on Adventism, to learn more about Adventism, and help both sides understand each other better.

This is my first post, and since we recently celebrated Easter, I thought some of the symbolism of Easter would be a good way to introduce the way Catholicism views symbols and sacramentals, something often looked at strangely by non-Catholic Christians.

I'll start off with a New Testament example familiar to most Christians.

Acts 19:12 – *So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.*

What happened here? In modern society, such acts would be viewed as superstitious. They'd be viewed as suspiciously Catholic by many. Yet in many Protestant denominations, anointed handkerchiefs or cloths are passed around, sometimes sent from specific ministries to those who request them. To what end?

Num 21:8 – *And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.*

Here we have another case of a physical symbol used by God for the purpose of healing. Was there magical power in these items? If we could get them here today, would they work for curing snake bites and other ailments?

Or were they physical signs through which God worked for those who had faith? Or were they merely symbols that were not necessary ... surely those who had faith, and didn't think it was necessary to look at the snake, were healed of their snake bite? Did Moses tell them to have faith, whether they looked at the snake or not, and they'd be healed? Did Paul tell the people to have faith and not worry about handkerchiefs? Or did he permit them to use them, in order to bring God's healing through the symbols of that faith?

It's fairly clear that in both Old Testament and New Testament times, it was believed that God worked through items that held religious significance. A snake he told Moses to make, the bones of Elisha, the hem of Jesus' clothes, and handkerchiefs from Paul.

It's not so much a question of whether God works this way or not; and why God works this way is another theological matter I won't delve into much, apart from saying that the Bible doesn't support the Gnostic notion that matter is evil – the Incarnation alone, which they denied, shows us that what God made was good, and came to us in physical form. The real question, for this discussion, is how God works through physical symbols. Magic? Faith, which without them would suffice? Or is there

a point to the symbols? Can God's grace come through physical objects that are symbols of an aspect of our faith?

If someone wears a cross around their neck, and touches it when they think of God and pray, does God work through that cross for them? Or is it pointless, irrelevant to God, something he doesn't use to bring us closer to him?

If someone sees a beautiful wild flower while hiking along a river – is that a sign of God's grace? Is it an offer of grace, moving us to thank him for the creation? Or is it not God's way of bringing us closer to him, and merely something nice, but not relevant to our faith, which we shouldn't express in physical ways?

Catholics believe that God works through physical expressions of our faith. There is no magical power involved, no incantation that makes appreciation for one flower more powerful than appreciation for another flower, no special type of cloth that makes Paul's handkerchiefs more potent than John's, no metallic properties that allows a gold cross to make prayer more effective than a steel or wooden cross. Yes, there may be a blessing whereby we ask God to allow the cross, or handkerchief, to be used for his glory, and be a reminder to us of his grace. But it's not magic. It's real. We believe that, when we use something like a cross or a handkerchief – or a flower – as an external symbol of our faith, God uses that to come to us in a very real way. That object, as a symbol of our faith, as a reminder of God, becomes a door to God, through which he pours out his grace.

We don't deny that faith without the symbols also brings that grace. But we acknowledge that faith can be enriched when it is expressed in those symbols. Most Protestant denominations acknowledge, to some extent, the significance of laying on of hands for the purposes of ordination and blessing. Adventists do this too. Few people deny that there is nothing special about hands that allow them to emit the power of the Holy Spirit – the only place I've found that idea is in various New Age concepts. But the practice remains a powerful sign, one most people who practice it believe God works through.

The Catholic word for these things is sacramentals. It sounds scary to those not familiar with Catholic-speak. It comes from the same Latin root as sacred, which also means holy – and as any good Bible dictionary will tell you, holy means “*set apart*” – set apart, dedicated, or consecrated for the glorification of God, in this case, and not, as some might think, sacred in some intrinsic way. The Hebrew equivalent of holy would be *qodesh* (Strong's 6944) and the equivalent of consecrate or sanctify would be *qadash* (Strong's H6942.) We've lost that sense of something being set apart in English, and even *hagios* in Greek.

Sacramentals include the cross, the crucifix, holy oil, baptismal water, salt, palms used just before Easter, and so forth. Some of these are shared by Protestants, some not, and few Protestants call them sacramentals. But the understanding is there, and to some extent a common theology, but not always a common practical application of that theology.

I think that most Adventists, if they put aside any suspicion of things Catholic, will recognise these principles in their own expression of their faith, and in the expression of faith in the Bible. The extent to which we practice this aspect of our faith varies, and the names we give it vary, but I do believe that there is some common ground here.

A final question that I'll get round to answering in the future – does God's grace come to us only when we ask for it? Or does God give it, and all we do is accept it or reject it? Is the reception of grace our work, or God's?

Chapter 90: Sacraments, or God reaching out through space and time

Guest post at the blog [Reinventing the Adventist Wheel](#).

It has been a bit too long since my first post on sacramentals (previous chapter in this book). It's quite some time after Easter, but I want to continue with how Easter affects us.

John 13:5-8 – After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

One term I've heard in Adventist circles for the ritual of foot washing is the ordinance of humility. In the Adventist tradition, it plays an important role – many Protestant churches don't have this practice at all, and Catholics have it only at Easter, specifically at the Holy Thursday service.

The Adventist Review has a good article online about foot washing here (dead link).

It ends with the following words:

“Once you've experienced it in this way, once you've beheld the Lamb of God, you will never again fear it. Instead, it will seem like a foretaste of heaven.”

I beg to differ with the author, or at least with his words' apparent meaning. It shouldn't seem like a foretaste of heaven. It IS a foretaste of heaven.

For some, this act is purely symbolic. It symbolises the act of Christ washing his disciples' feet. It symbolises humility. It seems like heaven.

For others, it is real. We partake of the act of Christ washing his disciples' feet. It involves humility, and nourishes it. It IS a foretaste of heaven.

If we look at it as symbolism, then there is the danger that it could be seen as an empty act, an act that may become less meaningful the more we begin to dislike ritual. Why gather and wash feet? Why not just be humble? If the act is empty, it may appear as if it's something we do to make ourselves grow spiritually, or something we do for God.

But the moment we internalise it, it stops being a symbolic act – even if we don't realise it yet. We cannot make ourselves humble. We cannot grow spiritually of our own doing. We cannot do something for God. Therefore the act, by the very fact that it is internalised, changing us, must involve something real coming from God. If it's real, it's not symbolic, or at least not completely symbolic.

Can we make God bless us? Can we, by engaging in a symbolic act, cause him to smile and reward us? Or is this a case of God offering something through the act itself, making that act real, more than symbolic, something God offers, and we accept?

Is the ordinance of foot washing something God offers us, or is it something we do to please him?

My take on this is that the sacrament of foot washing is a gift from God, his work, not ours. We can accept, or walk away.

What, then, of those who take part in such events without sincerity? If God offers us grace, a blessing, and we try to take it without a sincere heart, does it have any effect? Unlikely. So was that grace really given? It was offered, but not accepted. But the offer was real.

To Catholics, and others, that is a sacrament. An offer of grace, a work done by God, that we can accept and participate in and as a result grow in grace, or that we can appear to participate in but gain nothing from, or that we can walk away from at the start.

Intrinsically, it is a real offer. The offer is real, the grace is real. The work is real, but it's God's work. A physical work, yes, but God did say that his creation was good, and Christians have historically rejected the notion that matter is evil. After all, God became physical man.

People often think of Catholic sacraments as thing we must do to please God. But in reality, they're God doing things for us, and we can only accept or reject that gift. Any sacrament can become a burden if we don't understand that. If we do, it can only be a blessing.

Western Catholics count seven sacraments, limiting them to acts initiated, demonstrated, or endorsed by Jesus. Seven, because of the significance of the number seven. Foot washing is not amongst them; I don't know how the Orthodox would view foot washing, but Eastern Christians (Catholic and Orthodox) are not limited to that number, and have other sacraments. Most Protestants recognise at least two – baptism and communion. Adventists have foot washing. The word "*sacrament*" is derived from Latin, and not used to describe most Protestant ordinances, but linguistics aside, we all share physical acts as events through which God offers himself to us.

Is it possible for Adventists to share that view? If something like foot washing can be seen as a gift from God, something he offers, not something we do for him, I don't see why not.

Section 10: General articles defending Catholic teaching

Chapter 91: The use of statues, pictures, and other icons in worship

Do Catholics disobey the commandment on statues?

To me this is a fairly simple issue, and the problem lies in Protestant misinterpretation of the second commandment and of what the Bible says. It can be solved using the Bible alone, therefore I will deal with it first. The way I see it, the second commandment is conditional – we may make statues, pictures, etc., but we may not worship them. And since Catholics do not worship the images in their churches and homes, they are not breaking any of God's commandments by using those images.

Exodus 20:4-5a – You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God ...

This verse has been interpreted in two ways – no images may be made at all, and images may be made but not worshipped.

Common sense and experience tells us that it is the second interpretation that is the correct one – we may make images that are not worshipped. If the second commandment were absolute, it would be a sin to make photographs, put pictures in books, make statues of non-religious people. Most people (there are exceptions) do not go to that extreme.

Some people say, okay, but religious statues, pictures and icons are not allowed. Once again, most Protestants will disagree with that, at least in practice. Most Protestant churches allow illustrated Bibles – these contain pictures of the prophets, saints, and even depictions of God like those found in Daniel 7:9, and of course pictures of Jesus, the icon (εἰκών) of God in flesh – see 1 Cor 11:7. The Bible is also clear about the making of such graven images – it is permissible. In fact God himself commanded it – see Exodus 25:18-22, 26:1,31 (God commands statues and images of cherubim to be made), Num. 21:8-9 (God commands a statue of a snake to be made for religious purposes), 1 Kings 6:23-29,35, 7:25,29,36, 1 Chron 28:18-19, Ezek 41:15 (graven images of the sea, oxen, palm trees, cherubim, lions).

So all I can conclude from the above passages is that images are allowed, even in a religious context such as the Temple, as long as they are not worshipped.

Some objections can be made – the cherubim over the Ark would not be seen by many people, and therefore would not be worshipped. But this ignores the fact that while the ark was being carried around on the journeys of the people of Israel before it came to rest in the Temple, many people would see it. The images of oxen, lions, etc. would be seen by the average Israelite. And finally, the image of the snake was an image that God said the general public had to go to and look at in order to be healed of snake bite. The common Protestant objection to that today would be that it is only an image, it has no special powers, no faith in the image can save you, not even from snake bite, and

that to have such faith that looking to the image can indeed save you would constitute idolatry. However, God believed differently. He used this image to test the people's faith in him, not the image. Likewise today, when we look to an image, it is not the image of Christ on the cross we rely on or pray to or worship, but Christ himself. Same as with the snake, the same sort of respect.

The fact is that the people of Israel at that time were very much tempted to worship a piece of wood or brass that represented something, especially calves. The commandment was designed to stop them replacing their true God with false gods, and was not designed to keep their religious art forms limited to abstract painting. That sort of temptation is no longer an issue in modern culture – people don't want to worship a statue, they are aware that it is just a piece of plaster or wood. They worship in front of the statue, as the ancient Israelites showed their faith to God in front of a statue.

An objection that still often comes up is that we bow in front of this statue, and this appears to be forbidden by the second commandment. However, a look into what the Bible says about bowing gives a different picture.

There are certain verses that show people bowing down to other people or angels, and the person being honoured in this way stops the action, e.g. Rev 22:8-9. This is because the person realised that this person bowing down was doing so in an unfit way – he was worshipping him, which was wrong. That is why the action was stopped and corrected.

However, when bowing down to a person and not intending it as worship, but only out of respect, one is not sinning at all. 1 Sam 25:41 shows a woman bowing to David, and nowhere is this condemned. The Septuagint (LXX) uses the Greek word *proskuneo* (προσκυνέω) for both this action of respect as well as worship of God. See also the angels in Gen. 18:2-3 (LXX), and the master in Matt 18:26.

So we have concluded the following:

- The Bible condemns worship of images, but not the making of images
- The Bible condemns worship of angels and people, but not the honouring of them by bowing to them

That leaves us with the fact that it is not a sin to bow to an angel or saint in honour of him/her. And if we do not bow to their statue, but rather to them, that is not sinful. In fact it is something the Bible is completely silent on – i.e. bowing to saints in front of images of them. If the image is not sinful, the bowing is not sinful, then what is the problem with what Catholics do?

One further thing to note is that Catholics often seem to think of certain statues or other items as holy, to give them respect. Most notable of these is the Turin Shroud, which some claim is the burial shroud of Jesus. Protestants seem to think that honouring the bones of a holy man is wrong, or that honouring the tomb or belongings or relics of a holy man is wrong. To be more correct, Catholics worship God and honour the saints in the presence of these holy items, and do not honour them directly – that would be pointless. But Protestants still think it is as pointless to worship in the

presence of a saint's bones as it is to worship in the presence of a sack of flour. However, that is where Catholics and the Bible see differently to the Protestants.

Some Protestants have fallen prey to the heresy of the 1st century Gnostics. They believed that all that was physical was evil, and that good was found only in the spiritual. Hence they rejected the use of icons and symbols – physical, tangible means of worship (note: not objects of worship.) The consequence of this was that they rejected the idea that Jesus the physical man was actually God – the main heresy for which the Apostle John scolds them in his epistles, found in the Bible.

Look at scriptures like 2 Kings 13:20-21 (Elisha's bones perform a miracle), Matt 9:20-22 (the woman believed if she just touched Jesus' clothes she would be cured – and was cured), Acts 5:15-16 (Peter's shadow is seen as holy and miraculous), and Acts 19:11-12 (Paul's handkerchiefs are sent around to perform miracles on their own). Here we can see cases where physical objects carry with them miraculous power. Nowhere does the Bible tell us that such events are wrong, that the use of miraculous bones or objects is sacrilegious – in fact Acts 19:11-12 tells us that the miracles were organised by God himself. So it is quite understandable why Catholics, like the early Christians, see holiness on physical objects, and think it appropriate to give thanks to God for letting such holiness touch their lives by giving such items respect, and even a place to be seen and used in the churches and homes of the faithful.

Chapter 92: Vicarius Filii Dei and 666

Adventists like to present a fake papal title, Vicarius Filii Dei, as evidence that the papacy is linked to the number 666 found in Revelation 13:18, because, using Roman numerals, the title adds up to 666.

The supposed title is said to be used in two significant Catholic texts, as well as a Catholic newspaper.

The texts:

- The Decretum of Gratian, quoting the forged document known as the Donation of Constantine
- Crossing the Threshold of Hope by Pope St John Paul II
- Our Sunday Visitor, 1915

The Decretum of Gratian, quoting the forged document known as the Donation of Constantine.

This is the relevant passage from the Donation of Constantine:

Et dum haec praedicante beato Silvestrio agnoscerem et beneficiis ipsius beati Petri integre me sanitati comperi restitutum, utile iudicavimus una cum omnibus nostris satrapibus et universo senatu, optimatibus etiam et cuncto populo Romano, gloriae imperii nostri subiacenti, ut, sicut in terris vicarius filii dei esse videtur constitutus ...
– [Donation of Constantine](#)

You can see the words above contain “*beati Petri*” (blessed Peter) and “*vicarius filii dei*” (vicar of the Son of God).

This made its way into the Decretum of Gratian, 1148 AD, which was an early collection of church law, in the following form, copying the underlined text from above:

“Beatus Petrus in terris vicarius Filii Dei videtur esse consitutus.”

Translated into English, this means:

“Blessed Peter is seen to have been constituted vicar of the Son of God on earth.”

It is clear that in both texts, the term “*vicarius filii dei*” is not used as a title, but rather as a descriptive term, saying what Peter was.

So, looking honestly at these texts, there is no evidence of such a title.

Crossing the Threshold of Hope by Pope St John Paul II

The book contains the following phrase:

“The Pope is considered the man on earth who represents the Son of God ...”

Adventists argue that “*who represents the Son of God*”, when translated into Latin, is “*vicarius Filii Dei*”.

Firstly, this is not a title. Secondly, “*represents*” is not a noun, but rather a verb, and is translated as “*repraesentat*”, and “*the Son*” is accusative, not genitive – so the correct translation is “*Filium Dei repraesentat*” and not “*vicarius Filii Dei*”.

So, again, no title to be found here, and not even a use of the phrase.

Our Sunday Visitor, 1915

In the issue of 18 April 1915, the following question and answer were given:

*What are the letters on the Pope’s crown, and what do they signify, if anything?
The letters on the Pope’s crown are these: Vicarius Filii Dei, which is a Latin for “Vicar of the Son of God.”*

This one is simple – journalists are not infallible, they do not represent official Catholic teaching, and this statement provides no real support for the claim that “*Vicarius Filii Dei*” was a papal title omitted from all known lists of papal titles.

Furthermore, the author subsequently acknowledged that he was mistaken, and that no such inscription is present. People looked at the tiara, confirmed the absence of such an inscription, and it seems that the author had actually been misled by Adventist propaganda.

Adventist evidence

Worth noting is that Adventist scholar Dr Samuele Bacchiocchi did his own research into this, and had the following to say:

Another example of the blinding effect of tradition is the popular interpretation of the number of the beast “666” [Rev 13:18], as VICARIUS FILII DEI, a title allegedly used by the Pope on his Tiara—a claim that has been proven to be wrong. In a recent Sabbath School Quarterly devoted to the Book of Revelation, Dr. Angel Rodriguez, Director of BRI, acknowledged that the traditional interpretation, though popular, lacks textual and historical support. Instead, he proposed the figurative interpretation of “666” as the symbol of incompleteness, imperfection and rebellion. Concerned Adventists expressed their bitter disappointment with the new figurative interpretation of 666. They viewed it as a rejection of the traditional interpretation developed by our pioneers.

– Samuele Bacchiocchi, Endtimes Issues newsletter #134

Thank you, Dr Bacchiocchi, for that honesty. The Pope’s tiara does not have the words *Vicarius Filii Dei* on them. The phrase is not, and never was, used as an official papal title. It’s an anti-Catholic manipulation of a real papal title – *Vicarius Christi*.

Lastly, more for amusement than anything else, the name of the Adventist prophetess, Ellen White, adds up to 666.

Ellen Gould White: eLLen goVLD VVItE (the origin of the letter W is a double V)

$$\begin{aligned} &L + L + V + L + D + V + V + I \\ &= 50+50+5+50+500+5+5+1 \\ &= 666 \end{aligned}$$

In contrast to the pope, for whom no real title exists that adds up to 666, the name of Ellen White does indeed add up to 666. Make of it what you will.

Chapter 93: Does the pope claim to be God on earth?

Adventists, and other anti-Catholics, claim that popes have taught that they are God.

Anyone who knows anything about the Catholic Church knows that the pope doesn't consider himself to be God.

What the pope DOES consider himself to be:

1. Peter's successor, with Peter being left in charge of the Church after Jesus, who was God, returned to heaven
2. The representative of God to his flock
3. Sort of like a prime minister, left in charge by the king (Jesus) while he is away

I'll deal with several of the common quotes supposedly claiming the pope is God.

The Pope takes the place of Jesus Christ on earth... by divine right the Pope has supreme and full power in faith, in morals over each and every pastor and his flock. He is the true vicar, the head of the entire church, the father and teacher of all Christians. He is the infallible ruler, the founder of dogmas, the author of and the judge of councils; the universal ruler of truth, the arbiter of the world, the supreme judge of heaven and earth, the judge of all, being judged by no one, God himself on earth.
– New York Catechism

The document doesn't exist. Nobody has ever found it.

In the "Extravagantes" of Pope John XXII (Cum. Inter, title 14, chapter 4, "Ad Callem Sexti Decretalium", Column 140, Paris, 1685), Roman Canon Law says that it is heresy to deny the power of "Our Lord God the Pope." In an Antwerp edition of the Extravagantes, the words occur in column 153.

This is deceptive, for the following reasons:

1. The claim is false, adding in the word "God". The original text reads "our Lord Pope". "Lord" doesn't mean God, it is just a title for an important person or leader. Think of the British system of commoners and nobility. They have Lords and Dukes and Barons etc. Try to think of this in the language of the time, when such appellations were the norm.
2. The words themselves were not the words of Pope John XXII, and did not form part of canon law. They were a gloss by a canon lawyer. A gloss in this context means a comment written in the margin to clarify something the glossist thinks he should clarify. It doesn't form part of the actual text. This makes it a) an unofficial comment on the side, and b) not part of official Catholic teaching. The gloss itself is harmless, in the original form – all it does is express that the pope is the representative of Jesus, something Catholics believe anyway.

Pope Pius X. made the blasphemous claim that he was "Jesus Christ hidden under the veil of the flesh. Does the Pope speak? It is Jesus Christ who speaks."

– Pope Pius X, *Church Review*, Oct 3 1895, also in *Evangelical Christendom*, 1 Jan 1895

In 1895 Protestant newspaper, “*Church Review*” and “*Evangelical Christendom*”, claimed that this was said by Cardinal Sarto, who later became Pope Pius X. The claim by the newspaper was investigated, and found to be false. Cardinal Sarto produced the original document, and all it claimed was that “*the pope represents Jesus Christ himself*”. Nothing like what was claimed by the anti-Catholics.

We hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty
– Pope Leo XIII, *Encyclical Letter* of June 20, 1894

This is from a letter titled “*The Reunion of Christendom*”. And all this says is that the pope is God’s representative, or prime minister, left in charge of the Church after Jesus ascended back into heaven.

The context:

But since We hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty, who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth, and now that Our advanced age and the bitterness of anxious cares urge Us on towards the end common to every mortal, We feel drawn to follow the example of Our Redeemer and Master, Jesus Christ, who when about to return to Heaven, implored of God, His Father, in earnest prayer, that His disciples and followers should be of one mind and of one heart: “I pray...that they all may be one, as thou Father in Me, and I in Thee: that they also may be one in Us.”

– Pope Leo XIII, [The Reunion of Christendom](#), 1894

Clearly the pope doesn’t consider himself to be his own “Redeemer and Master” whose example he follows and whose prayer he prays.

I am in all and above all, so that God Himself and I, the vicar of God, hath both one consistory, and I am able to do almost all that God can do... wherefore, if those things that I do be said not to be done of man, but of God, what do you make of me but God? Again, if prelates of the Church be called of Constantine for gods, I then being above all prelates, seem by this reason to be above all gods. Wherefore, no marvel, if it be in my power to dispense with all things, yea with the precepts of Christ.
– Pope Nicholas I, *Decret. par. Distinct 96 ch. 7 edit. Lugo 1661*

This is a made-up quote, and the source is the anti-Catholic book “*Acts and Monuments*” by John Foxe, who quoted a lot of statements that never existed.

The Pope is not only the representative of Jesus Christ, He is Jesus Christ himself, hidden under the veil of flesh.
– *Catholic National* July 1895

Another bogus quote from a publication that doesn’t exist.

The appellation of God had been confirmed by Constantine on the Pope, who being God, cannot be judged by man.

*– Pope Nicholas I, Labb IX Dist.: 96 Can 7 Satis Evidetur Decret Gratian Primer
Para*

Bogus source, real quote, but badly translated from the Latin to make Pope Nicholas appear to be saying that the pope is God. Pope Nicholas I is really saying that the pope gets his authority from God.

Don't fall for misquotes and bogus quotes.

Further reading:

[Have Popes Really Claimed to be God?](#) ... by Geoff Horton

[A Response to Catholic "Inventions"](#) ... by Phil Porvaznik

[The Truth about the title "Lord God the Pope"](#) ... by Sean Hyland

[Pope claimed to be God?](#) ... Catholic Point

Chapter 94: Simon the stone, Peter the rock

Adventists like to claim that when Jesus renamed Peter, “petros” meant “pebble” and not “rock”. Not true.

Matt 16:18 – *And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

“The modern widespread majority Protestant view on the Matthew verse agrees with the Roman Catholic view, and disagreements about primacy stem from doctrinal sources, and disagreements such as disagreements over the identification of Simon Peter with the Pope.”

– Wikipedia, Primacy of Peter (as at 24 Sept 2006)

A few quotes from many at that page from Protestant scholars (emphasis mine):

Although it is true that petros and petra can mean “stone” and “rock” respectively in earlier Greek, the distinction is largely confined to poetry. Moreover the underlying Aramaic is in this case unquestionable; and most probably kepha was used in both clauses (“you are kepha” and “on this kepha”), since the word was used both for a name and for a “rock.” The Peshitta (written in Syriac, a language cognate with Aramaic) makes no distinction between the words in the two clauses. The Greek makes the distinction between petros and petra simply because it is trying to preserve the pun, and in Greek the feminine petra could not very well serve as a masculine name. ... Had Matthew wanted to say no more than that Peter was a stone in contrast with Jesus the Rock, the more common word would have been lithos (“stone” of almost any size).

– D.A. Carson, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Volume 8 (Matthew, Mark, Luke), ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 368.

The Aramaic original of the saying enables us to assert with confidence the formal and material identity between p tra petra and P tros; P tros = p tra. ... The idea of the Reformers that He is referring to the faith of Peter is quite inconceivable ... for there is no reference here to the faith of Peter. Rather, the parallelism of “thou art Rock” and “on this rock I will build” shows that the second rock can only be the same as the first . It is thus evident that Jesus is referring to Peter, to whom he has given the name Rock. ... To this extent Roman Catholic exegesis is right and all Protestant attempts to evade this interpretation are to be rejected.

– Oscar Cullman, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1968], 6:98, 108.

The word refers neither to Christ as a rock, distinguished from Simon, a stone, nor to Peter’s confession, but to Peter himself, ... The reference of petra to Christ is forced and unnatural. The obvious reference of the word is to Peter. The emphatic this naturally refers to the nearest antecedent; and besides, the metaphor is thus weakened, since Christ appears here, not as the foundation, but as the architect: “On this rock will I build.” Again, Christ is the great foundation, the chief cornerstone, but the New Testament writers recognize no impropriety in applying to the members of Christ’s church certain terms which are applied to him. For instance, Peter himself (1 Peter 2:4), calls Christ a living stone, and in ver. 5, addresses the church as living stones.

– Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1946 (orig. 1887)), 4 vols., vol. 1, 91-92.

This is not a name, but an appellation and a play on words. There is no evidence of Peter or Kephias as a name before Christian times. ... Peter as Rock will be the foundation of the future community. Jesus, not quoting the Old Testament, here uses Aramaic, not Hebrew, and so uses the only Aramaic word which would serve his purpose. In view of the background of vs. 19, one must dismiss as confessional interpretation any attempt to see this rock as meaning the faith, or the Messianic confession, of Peter. To deny the pre-eminent position of Peter among the disciples or in the early Christian community is a denial of the evidence. The interest in Peter's failures and vacillations does not detract from this pre-eminence; rather, it emphasizes it. Had Peter been a lesser figure his behavior would have been of far less consequence (cp. Gal 2:11 ff.).

– W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1971), 195.

It is on Peter himself, the confessor of his Messiahship, that Jesus will build the Church. ... Attempts to interpret the 'rock' as something other than Peter in person (e.g. his faith, the truth revealed to him) are due to Protestant bias, and introduce to the statement a degree of subtlety which is highly unlikely.

– David Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 261.

Chapter 95: Did Catholics change the Bible?

Someone emailed me and wrote:

The Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 in the Torah match the Ten Commandments in the KJV and all the protestant bibles. That in itself is proof that the Catholic Church changed the Ten Commandments.

One needs to compare the 10 Commandments in the Torah and the KJV to the Catholic Bible too. And when you do, what happens? The passages containing the 10 Commandments are all right there, the same as in the Jewish and Protestant Bibles.

That is proof that nothing has changed.

The difference is in numbering – and the Jews number them differently to Protestants and Catholics, and most Protestants number them differently from most Catholics ... since the numbers are not assigned in the Bible, that really doesn't make a difference. The content is the same.

As the discussion went on, he raised the issues of the numbering of the 10 commandments, and the claim that the Catholic Church has changed the 10 Commandments.

Catholics and Protestants numbering the 10 commandments differently, something I've discussed before. The point was raised that the Jews have one commandment for coveting, and so the Protestant numbering system, which does the same, must be right.

The Jews do indeed have one commandment for coveting – but, just like Catholics, the Jews differ from Protestants in their first and second commandments. The Jews combine verses 3-6 into one commandment, while Protestants split them into two commandments (first and second). For the Jews, verse 2 is a separate commandment, the first, and verses 3, 4 and 5 make up the 2nd commandment. For Catholics, like Jews, verses 3-6 are one commandment, but the first.

Let's look at the start of the 10 Commandments in Exodus, with the Jewish, Protestant, and Catholic divisions explained:

Jewish numbering:

Exodus 20:1-6 – [1] And God spake all these words, saying,

First commandment: [2] I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Second commandment: [3] Thou shalt have no other gods before me. [4] Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: [5] Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; [6] And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my

commandments.

Third commandment continues with verse 7.

Protestant numbering:

Exodus 20:1-6 – [1] And God spake all these words, saying, [2] I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

First commandment: [3] Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Second commandment: [4] Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: [5] Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; [6] And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

Third commandment continues with verse 7.

Catholic numbering:

Exodus 20:1-6 – [1] And God spake all these words, saying, [2] I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

First commandment: [3] Thou shalt have no other gods before me. [4] Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: [5] Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; [6] And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

Second commandment continues with verse 7.

In Exodus, the commandments against coveting are joined in one, whereas in Deuteronomy, they're split between wife and possessions, as a parallel to the commandments against adultery and stealing.

Let's look at how the commandments on coveting finish off the counting:

Jewish numbering

Deut 5:21 –

Tenth commandment: Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is thy neighbour's.

Protestant numbering

Deut 5:21 –

Tenth commandment: Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is thy neighbour's.

Catholic numbering

Deut 5:21 (KJV) –

Ninth commandment: Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife,

Tenth commandment: neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is thy neighbour's.

So we've really got 3 different ways to count the commandments, and unless someone can show me where in the Bible (Jewish, Protestant, or Catholic) the numbering is given, no one system of counting them is superior to the others.

In fact, there is no "Catholic" numbering system and no "Protestant" numbering system, because Catholics officially use both, and both are used by different Protestant churches. Western Catholics and Lutherans, for example, use the numbering commonly considered Catholic, while Eastern Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and most Protestants use the numbering commonly considered Protestant.

Those who gripe about numbering are not basing their complaint on the Bible, which doesn't assign numbers, but rather they dislike one numbering system amongst others based on it seeming to be Catholic.

Summarising the commandments

When Catholics draw up a summary of the 10 commandments, the first commandment is usually abbreviated and cut to the first words – "*Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*" Some people use this to accuse the Catholic Church of simply snipping out Exodus 3:6 and Deut 8-10.

They are not able to (or don't want to) differentiate between the 10 commandments themselves and a summarised list to make them easy to remember. This seems to be because of an anti-Catholic bias they have. The full 10 commandments are found, in full, in the Catholic Bible and in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. What they seem to think is the Catholic 10 commandments is simply an abbreviation intended to allow easy memorisation of them.

Take a look at Protestant lists designed to make memorisation of the commandments easier. They generally say "*Thou shalt not covet*" instead of citing the entire Exodus 20:17 or Deut 5:21. They generally say "*Keep the Sabbath day holy*" instead of citing the entire Exodus 20:8-11 or Deut 5:12-15.

Ironically, Adventists themselves have got abbreviated versions that are a) easy to memorise, and b) easy to fit onto images of stone tablets, and they frequently make these same claims, accusing us of changing the 10 commandments, when they can really only accuse us of having a convenient

summary of them, just as they do.

Ángel Manuel Rodríguez of the Adventist church's Biblical Research Institute has the following to say in an article, [Counting Commandments](#):

In conclusion, it really doesn't matter how we count the commandments as long as we do not modify in any way their sacred content.

Chapter 96: Baptism by immersion only?

Adventists baptise only by full immersion (submersion), and they don't consider other forms of baptism to be real baptisms. They also don't baptise infants, but that's another story for another day.

As with the sabbath, Adventism's doctrine is based on selected texts and not the entire biblical picture. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, recognises all three modes of baptism depicted in the Bible. We baptise by immersion (single or triple) and by pouring, and while we don't baptise by sprinkling, we recognise its validity.

In a typical Adventist discussion, like the one I had this week on Facebook, you'll be presented with only those passages in the Bible where people were baptised in rivers, and only those passages that depict baptism as a symbolic burial.

The Catholic Church acknowledges these passages, but doesn't read more into them than they actually say. And we read the rest of the Bible too, and find other texts there that indicate that immersion is not the only valid, biblical form.

Considering that there are several denominations that baptise by immersion only and don't recognise anything else as a real baptism, it's surprising that there is not one single passage in the Bible that shows a single case of baptism that was definitively done by full immersion. Only indirectly, through St Paul's analogy of burial, do we get confirmation that baptism can be done by full immersion.

Texts supposedly proving full immersion baptisms

Let's look at the common texts showing baptism in rivers:

Matt 3:16 – And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him

Nothing in this verse says Jesus was fully immersed. He could have had water poured on his head, and then gone out of the water onto the river bank. The phrase “*went up out of the water*” can be performed whether one was fully immersed or only standing in the water. All we can tell from this is that Jesus was in the water – we cannot tell how deep.

John 3:23 – And John also was baptizing in Ænon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized

Nothing in this verse says anyone was fully immersed. Just because there was water, doesn't mean that they were fully immersed. The phrases “*much water*” and “*fully immersed*” do not mean the same thing.

Another passage that people present as proof of full immersion is Acts 8:38-39. Yet the funny thing

about this is that the verse attributes the same degree of wetness to the person performing the baptism as it does to the person being baptised.

Acts 8:38-39 – And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

Here again we have two people going “*down into the water*” and coming “*up out of the water*.” If you read the text, you’ll see that the eunuch went down into the water, and came up out of the water. This Adventists interpret as being fully immersed. But if you read carefully, you’ll notice that Philip also went down into the water and came up out of the water. They both did! Does that mean Philip was also fully immersed?

Some Adventists seem to think that going down into water and coming out of it again is an absolute indication of full immersion. Not so, unless Philip dunked himself as well.

Baptism as a burial with Christ

Let’s look further at what baptism means:

Adventists quote verses like Romans 6:4 and Col 2:12 to show that baptism is likened to a burial. But they ignore the other analogies made in Scripture. Catholics believe in the burial symbolism too, but we read the whole Bible, not selected parts, and find more.

Adventists also quote 1 Cor 10:1-2:

1 Cor 10:1-2 – Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea

They forget that during this baptism, the Israelites were not immersed in water at all. The sea parted and they walked through on dry land. At most, they were sprinkled with spray being blown in the wind.

Baptism as washing

The Greek word for “*baptise*” is βαπτίζω (baptizo). Are there times when “*baptizo*” is used for washing without immersion? Yes.

Luke 11:38 – And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed (baptizo) before dinner.

In that verse, “*washed*” is “*baptizo*” – and Mark’s parallel passage (Mark 7:3-4) shows that the Jews didn’t fully immerse before eating – they washed their hands.

Mark 7:3-4 – For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash (nipto) their hands oft,

eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they **wash** (baptizo), they eat not. ...

In Mark, the first “wash” is the Greek “*nipto*” and the second wash is “*baptizo*”. The Jews washed their hands before eating – they didn’t fully immerse themselves.

So there we have it – “*baptizo*” can be used to mean “wash”, and the Bible does use it that way.

One could argue that baptism was done by immersion of the hands. However, that is not the way Jews did it. This is how they do it:

*Contemporary practice is to **pour** water on each hand three times for most purposes using a cup, and alternating the hands between each occurrence; this ritual is now known by the Yiddish term *negel vasser*, meaning nail water. This Yiddish term is also used for a special cup used for such washing.*

– Wikipedia, [Ritual washing in Judaism](#)

You can find the same information here: [Hand Washing](#) (MyJewishLearning), and this video – [How to Wash Hands Before Eating Bread](#) (Jewish Pathways, on YouTube).

Baptism as sprinkling

Hebrews 9-10 show us a fascinating comparison. Like in the rest of Hebrews, the Old Covenant is compared to the New Covenant. Under the Old Covenant, there were various ritual washings that took place – washings of people and washings of things. The washing often took the form of sprinkling of either water or blood.

Hebrews 9-10 starts off by talking about the Old Covenant, and then gets specific – and speaks of washings, using the Greek noun βαπτισμός (baptismos).

Heb 9:10 – Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers **washings** (baptismos), and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

The author of Hebrews then goes on to describe various washings (and sacrifices). After describing what took place under the Old Covenant, he shows what happens with the New Covenant. The passage starts off with washing, shows three types of sprinklings as examples, and then ends off in the next chapter with washing by pure water and sprinkling of our hearts (Heb 10:22, shown below). What a way to describe baptism!

These washings were types of baptism. Verses 13, 19, and 21 show us the washings. All three types of washings (baptismos) mentioned are done by sprinkling!

Heb 9:13 – For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer **sprinkling** the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh

Heb 9:19 – For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and

sprinkled both the book, and all the people

Heb 9:21 – Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.

There is a Greek word for sprinkling – “*rhantizo*” – which is used in this passage where you see the English word “*sprinkling*”. But the fact that “*rhantizo*” is used in this passage as a subset of “*baptismos*” is very telling.

Heb 10:22 – Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Purifying is symbolised by baptism, which brings forgiveness of sins. Yet in the Old Testament, blood was sprinkled on the altar for the forgiveness of sins, and the ashes of the heifer were mixed with water and were called the waters of sprinkling which purified the unclean. So baptism is symbolised by sprinkling too.

When are our bodies washed with water in a religious sense? Only baptism. In baptism, water washes our bodies outwardly – so here we see that baptism is a symbol of washing clean. In baptism, our hearts are inwardly made clean – and here we see that baptism is compared to sprinkling.

You’ll probably notice that Adventism has problems differentiating properly between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant – this leads them to a very problematic view of the sabbath as well.

Other passages of relevance:

Ezek 36:25 – Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

What does baptism do? It makes us clean. How is it symbolised in this verse? By sprinkling.

Numbers 19:13 – Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him.

How does water make people clean in this verse? By sprinkling. What does baptism do? It makes us clean.

Baptism as pouring

Baptism with the Holy Spirit is compared to the Holy Spirit being poured out. And think of the tongues of fire (Acts 2:2) – they were not fully encompassed by flames, but rather touched by tongues of fire.

Mark 1:8 – I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

Acts 2:17a – And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will **pour out** of my Spirit upon all flesh ...

Acts 2:38 – Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Here baptism is compared to pouring – the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. Being baptised by the Holy Spirit is the same as having the Holy Spirit poured out on you.

Acts 10:45-48 – And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was **poured out** the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

Here baptism is again compared to the gift of the Holy Spirit – the Holy Spirit is poured out, and the reference to baptism is clear. The baptism with the Holy Spirit was by pouring, so why not also with water?

Problems with sufficient water

Many of the baptism events recorded in the New Testament show situations where bodies of water large enough for full immersion would have been scarce. Inside a prison (Acts 16:33)? Hardly. 3000 people all at once (Acts 2:41)? There was not a water supply big enough to cope with that – and even if there was, the Jews would not have allowed their water supply to be contaminated by 3000 bodies being fully immersed in it. And they would also have chased the Christians out of the temple if they had tried using the Jewish ritual baths for this on such a scale.

Conclusion:

The Bible clearly has baptism shown as burial, washing, pouring, and sprinkling. That should be enough for any Bible-believer who isn't clinging to his/her traditions. Baptists – well, they'd have to give up their name (although the original Anabaptists used pouring and sprinkling as well as immersion); Adventists are distant relatives of the Baptists, and cling to any difference they have with the Catholic Church and her teachings and practices. [I've got another post about some of the irrational arguments they recently put forth in the discussion I had.](#) (blog only)

Adventists cling to their traditions on one extreme – full immersion. What if a finger was not immersed? Is the baptism valid? What if a hair was not immersed? Is the baptism valid? It's silly. It's hair splitting.

Quakers cling to their traditions on the other extreme – they don't need water at all.

God gave us baptism with water. But he didn't specify how much. God tells us in the Scriptures that baptism is a type of burial, a type of washing (and washing and purification includes sprinkling according the Old Testament and the book of Hebrews), and a type of pouring. God tells us that we are baptised in the Holy Spirit – and that the Holy Spirit is poured out on us. That's a strong comparison – baptism and pouring are the same with the Holy Spirit, so why not with water?

So those who fully immerse baptise validly. Those who baptise by pouring also baptise validly. And those who baptise by sprinkling (which Catholics do not do) also baptise validly.

Are you a Bible-believing Christian? If so, you should accept what the Bible says about baptism – burial, washing, sprinkling. Are you an Adventist clinging to your church's traditions? If so, stop rejecting what the Bible says and believe ALL of what the Bible says instead of those verses selected for you by your pastors and teachers.

Further reading:

[Catholic Answers Forum – Baptism: Sprinkling or Immersion?](#)

[Catholic Answers – Baptism: Immersion only?](#)

[Apologetics for the Masses #259 – Bible Christian Society, John Martignoni](#)

[Apologetics for the Masses #260 – Bible Christian Society, John Martignoni](#)

Chapter 97: Halos – pagan or biblical?

Some Christians dislike halos. That is often just another excuse to dislike the Catholic Church.

Where did halos really come from?

Well, art. Art depicted all sorts of religious figures – saints, deities, those in-between – as having a halo. Why? Because all religions recognise that holiness is akin to light. And if someone is holy, they emit light – physical or metaphorical. So ... draw them emitting light. How? Use a halo – otherwise you have a white blob covering a subject that can't be seen.

Did halos exist in the pagan world?

Yes. Where did they get the idea from? Three possibilities – they made it up for the purposes of their religion; they used logic and determined that if holiness is like a spiritual light, light around a person's head can indicate holiness; they got the tradition from existing revelation from the true God.

Are halos biblical?

Yes.

Exod 34:29 – *And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.*

Matt 17:1-2 – *And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.*

So ... was Jesus mimicking paganism? Is the Bible adopting pagan beliefs in describing Moses and Jesus has having shining faces? Or is it the other way around – could the origin of light as a symbol of holiness have come from God, and the pagans adopted it from the true record of God's revelation?

My answer is that they a) may have invented it themselves due to the logic that light symbolises holiness, using a natural logic reflecting a creation by the true God, or b) they adopted it from the evidence of God's revelation to mankind.

Halos are an artistic way of depicting holiness, derived from biblical revelation. There is nothing to fear. Adventists in particular have a fear of anything to do with the sun, but the light is not with them.

What about the shape when it happens to be drawn as a circle? Is that not pagan?

No – it represents a crown. God is King, and kings wear crowns. Christians are victors, and will wear crowns.

Revelation 14:14 – And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

Revelation 12:1 – And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars

1 Peter 5:4 – And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

A crown-shaped source of light? An artistic representation of our crowns and the light of grace.

God made nature to show us halos. God reveals himself with one. God tells us that we will have a crown. Do not fear the light.

Chapter 98: Call no man father

I often hear people criticising the use of the term “father” to describe Catholic priests, based on Matthew 23:1-12.

Matthew 23:1-12 – Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

If Jesus meant that nobody was to call anyone on earth “father”, and meant it in the sense of forbidding the word, then what of biological fathers? No exception is made for them ... and it remains a word, and name, by which they were/are called.

Rom 4:1, James 2:21, Luke 1:73, and Acts 7:2 have Abraham being called a father, in an ancestral/spiritual sense. Rom 4:16 has Abraham called the “*father of us all*”. Isaac is called “*our father Isaac*” in Rom 9.

Timothy’s father was a Greek, says Acts 16. That’s not metaphorical or figurative. Yet this man was called Timothy’s father, when Timothy was a Christian whose father was God.

1 Cor 4:15 has Paul calling himself a father in a spiritual sense.

Obviously the term “*father*” can be used in a biological sense. And obviously it can be used in a spiritual sense.

If Jesus forbade the use of the term “father” and if a question is asked in any particular instance, “*was that man called a father?*” then I don’t see how the answer can be “No” in any of these cases. Which means that there are exceptions, or that it was not meant to prohibit a specific word, or that the writers of the New Testament were simply in error to use the term the way they did for Isaac, Abraham, *et al.*

The context of Jesus’ statement is pride. It was pride that puffed these people up to hear themselves called “*rabbi*” or “*teacher*” or “*master*” or a spiritual father. Addressing a teacher as “teacher” is not wrong ... yet the passage forbids that too (the word “*master*” in the KJV is a guide or a teacher,

according to Strong's.) So the term "*doctor*" (the Latin translation) would be equally wrong. (We can exclude the medical doctor for the sake of argument, but not someone with a doctorate.)

If Jesus was referring to words not to be used, then they shouldn't have been used elsewhere in the Bible, especially the New Testament period after he gave that prohibition. If we can ever answer "Yes" to the question "*was that man called a father?*" then we have to either conclude that it is a case of disobedience to Jesus' ruling, or we need to ask if it fits the description of the people Jesus was criticising – "*do they use the title because it places them in a position of power, due to pride, or to be seen as important?*"

Many non-Catholics might attribute the title "*father*" used by priests to imply such things. They often think of Catholic priests as all-powerful dictators over their congregation, demanding authority and submission to their interpretation of anything and everything. But that is not the case in actual Catholic theology, and in the experience of most Catholics, not at all the reason why priests use that title. In Catholic theology, it gets used in the same sense as the Bible uses it for Paul and Abraham and Isaac, and in the sense of a spiritual leader acting as a father to his household, the congregation, as much subject to Christ as Paul and Abraham and Isaac were. In a practical sense, it's a convenient term to call a priest – especially one whose name you don't know. And by the time you know his name, it's already what you're calling him, so it sticks. My father calls our bishop "*George*" and the nuns (and many others, but the nuns are usually the majority) at our church call the priest by his name. Pride doesn't come into the use of the term ... and if a priest did take pride in it, it would be criticised by the Catholic Church just as it was by Christ.

Chapter 99: Call no man Father? Tell Ellen White!

Adventists and others accuse Catholics of disobeying Jesus by calling our priests “Father”.

There is plenty of biblical evidence to show that it is quite okay to do call them that.

But the interesting thing is that Ellen White referred to William Miller, the founder of the Millerite movement that started Adventism, as “*Father Miller*”, and gives one of the Catholic reasons for doing so (cf 1 Cor 4:15):

*He was indeed rightly called **Father Miller**, for he had a watchful care over those who came under his ministrations, was affectionate in his manner, of genial and tender heart.*

– Ellen White – Life Sketches of James White and Ellen G. White 1880, page 149

*He was indeed rightly called **Father Miller**, for he had a watchful care over those who came under his ministrations, was affectionate in his manner, of a genial disposition and tender heart.*

– Ellen White – Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, page 22

*As **Father Miller** made a practical application of Scripture truth to the hearts of his hearers ...*

– Ellen White – Christ Triumphant, page 337

That pretty much makes hypocrites of Adventists who accuse Catholics of being unscriptural. They consider Ellen White to be inspired, and her writings are used as a lens through which to interpret the Bible.

Chapter 100: What is purgatory?

I have been asked by an Adventist:

OK let say a catholic individual study his or her bible and learns John 3:16, 1john 1:9, Col 2:14 and other. He began to understand the death of Jesus paid in full for penalty of his sins. That Jesus took away all his sins and reconciliation with God and made possible through the blood of Jesus. But the catholic teaching says he has to suffer for his sins in purgatory before he enters heaven. What is he to do?

The passages he cites:

John 3:16 – For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

1 John 1:9 – If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Colossians 2:14 – Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

If we sin, we need forgiveness. Once we are forgiven, we usually still need to learn a better way. That is the purpose of Gods' discipline – teaching us that bad things are bad, and to prefer good things. God could, of course, snap his fingers and make us all perfect ... but he doesn't. He teaches us through the consequences of our sins. If we lie, and ask for forgiveness, we are forgiven, but still get to learn from the embarrassment, or pain, or loss, or whatever the lie caused.

Purgatory is often misunderstood to be a place we go to in order to finish the punishment for sin that wasn't removed by Christ. That's not exactly true.

Christ paid the full price for our salvation, but what he didn't remove was the discipline we would require in order to grow as Christians. I think that is a belief shared by the vast majority of Christian denominations. The difference between Catholics and Protestants is that Catholics believe that, when discipline is still needed to finish our development into a fully Christ-like servant of God, that process continues after death, before entry into heaven. Protestants, seemingly, consider that pending discipline to be discarded/ignored, and what is lacking simply added on without that process of learning, so entry into heaven would be "immediate". Probably Adventists believe the same as Protestants, with the difference regarding the timing of entry into heaven relative to the time of death / end of time.

So, for Catholics, purgatory exists in this life (not always stated that way) and after death; for Protestants, purgatory (not called that) exists in this life, and not after death.

However ... Adventists, I think (but not all Protestants), believe that even the saved will have to face their sins in the final judgement. They won't be condemned by them, but they will have to face

the reality of what their sins actually meant (a realisation few people reach in this life.) I doubt Adventism would call it a purification, but I can't imagine that such a revelation about the true nature of their sinfulness would NOT bring about a change for the better in those who are saved, which then amounts to the same thing.

And that is purgatory ... not a mystical version of hell that has fire and brimstone but one can escape from when enough pain has been inflicted, but rather the trials and tribulations of life that make us grow – if we let them – into a more Christ-like person.

True faith in Christ requires that process – and in that sense, and only that sense, is sanctification/purgatory a requirement for salvation. But if it's part of the definition of true faith that we submit to God and let him change us, then it's not truly an "extra" but rather part of the results of true faith that we are sanctified / purified of our sinful nature.

The following from the article "*Sanctification*" by Dr William Ames (a puritan, 1567-1633) shows the process that we see as purging:

- 1. The real change of state is an alteration of qualities in man himself. 2 Cor. 5:17, Old things have passed away; all things are new.*
- 2. The change is not in relation or reason, but in genuine effects seen in degrees of beginning, progress, and completion. 2 Cor. 4:16, The inner man is renewed day by day.*
- 4. Sanctification is the real change in man from the sordidness of sin to the purity of God's image. Eph. 4:22-24, Put off that which pertains to the old conversation, that old man, corrupting itself in deceivable lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind. Put on that new man who according to God is created to righteousness and true holiness.*
- 5. just as in justification a believer is properly freed from the guilt of sin and has life given him (the title to which is, as it were, settled in adoption), so in sanctification the same believer is freed from the sordidness and stain of sin, and the purity of God's image is restored to him.*
- 13. The starting point of sanctification is the filthiness, corruption, or stain of sin. 2 Cor. 7: 1, Let us purge ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, being led to holiness in the fear of God.*
- 14. Its end is the purity of God's image (said to be fashioned or created once more in Knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, Eph. 4:24) or Conformity to the law of God, Jas. 1:25; Newness of life, Rom. 6:4; the New creature, 2 Cor. 5:17 and Gal. 6:15; and the Divine nature, 2 Peter 1:4.*

The relevant biblical texts:

Hebrews 12:6-11 – For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh

which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

1 Cor 3:15 – If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

In summary, Jesus paid the full price for our sins. That is the atonement, which relates to justification. But he did not take away the chastisement necessary for our growth as Christians. That is sanctification, and Catholics call its completion purgatory – they are one and the same thing. So there is no conflict at all with the atonement achieved for us by Christ. That atonement is not what we complete by sanctification.

Further reading:

[Purgatory? Where’s That in the Bible?](#) ... by Mark Shea

[Purgatory](#) ... Catholic Answers

[How To Explain Purgatory To Protestants](#) ... by James Akin

Chapter 101: A simple explanation of justification

While Catholics and Lutherans (and some other Protestants) have agreed that both sides mean the same thing when they use different words, there remains tension with some regarding salvation by faith alone vs salvation by grace alone. Our response to grace is sometimes mistakenly seen by Protestants as being our own works, and therefore of no value to God. They seem to ignore Galatians 2:20.

Galatians 2:20 – I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

The only time in the Bible where the two words “faith” and “alone” are mentioned in the same verse, faith alone is regarded as insufficient.

James 2:17 – Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

Between Paul and James, we see that Abraham was justified by faith and by works:

Romans 4:1-2 – What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.

James 2:21-24 – Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

A simple explanation for Protestants to consider is this:

Initial justification comes by faith through grace. This is what Protestants typically think of when they talk about justification.

But, biblically, justification continues – it’s not a one-time event. Justification is not a boolean operator – either on or off, present or absent. It continues, and is progressive.

Continued, progressive justification is where we submit our faith to God and follow his will. Abraham was justified by faith (a gift by grace) in Genesis 15, and then he was further justified by his obedience in Genesis 22, which too was a gift by grace. His initial justification, which is either present or absent, came by faith. But he continued to grow in justification, through grace.

Protestants usually think of that as sanctification, but when listening to Catholics they need to understand how we use the words, and not assume that we mean the same thing they do when we use the same words they do.

St Therese of Lisieux saw herself as a small wild flower growing in God's garden:

Jesus set before me the book of nature. I understand how all the flowers God has created are beautiful, how the splendor of the rose and the whiteness of the lily do not take away the perfume of the violet or the delightful simplicity of the daisy. I understand that if all flowers wanted to be roses, nature would lose her springtime beauty, and the fields would no longer be decked out with little wild flowers. So it is in the world of souls, Jesus' garden. He has created smaller ones and those must be content to be daisies or violets destined to give joy to God's glances when He looks down at His feet. Perfection consists in doing His will, in being what He wills us to be.

– St Therese of Lisieux, Story of a Soul

Consider containers of different sizes. A large bucket, a small cup. We are all destined to be filled to the brim with God's grace, but some may have more than others, yet all will be complete according to God's love for us, and completely filled with grace.

Further reading:

[Was Abraham saved by Faith Alone?](#) ... by Steve Ray

[The Disasters of "By Faith Alone"](#) ... Catholic Answers

[What is purgatory?](#) ... this blog

[St Therese of Lisieux, Story of a Soul](#)

Chapter 102: Pope Francis – Jesus' failure on the cross?

The anti-Catholics have again latched onto Pope Francis' words and taken them out of context. Adventists are rejoicing.

In a sermon at Vespers at St Patrick's Cathedral in New York, he used the words "cross" and "failure" in the same sentence. Now anti-Catholics who can't read context are spreading the idea that the Pope called Jesus and the Cross a failure.

Let's look at Pope Francis' words:

We can get caught up measuring the value of our apostolic works by the standards of efficiency, good management and outward success which govern the business world. Not that these things are unimportant! We have been entrusted with a great responsibility, and God's people rightly expect accountability from us. But the true worth of our apostolate is measured by the value it has in God's eyes. To see and evaluate things from God's perspective calls for constant conversion in the first days and years of our vocation and, need I say, great humility. The cross shows us a different way of measuring success. Ours is to plant the seeds: God sees to the fruits of our labors. And if at times our efforts and works seem to fail and produce no fruit, we need to remember that we are followers of Jesus... and his life, humanly speaking, ended in failure, the failure of the cross.

He starts off saying that our apostolic works are often judged (by us) by the definitions of success found in the business world.

He goes on to say that their true worth is measured by their value in God's eyes.

We feel that our efforts produce no fruit. But he's arguing that they DO produce fruit, in God's eyes. We may not see that fruit, but God does.

He compares that feeling about our human experience with Jesus.

In human terms – "*humanly speaking*" – Jesus died, and wasn't a conquering Messiah who would lead Israel against her enemies as a literal king.

We DO need to remember that – **humanly speaking** – Jesus, the cross, love, mercy ... these are all failures. But not to God. Not in God's eyes. And that is what Pope Francis is saying.

The wolves cannot read, or don't want to read. They see the words "*failure of the cross*" and abandon context and honesty in order to promote their nasty agenda. I don't see how any honest person can read the entire paragraph, notice the words "*humanly speaking*", and misunderstand. The wolves bear false witness. It's what they do.

True Christians see otherwise.

These words ring so true coming from this man who so obviously cares not a whit for

the attractions the world has to offer and who is, instead, content to live the simplicity the Gospel demands of its ministers.

– Michael Winters at [NCROnline](#)

Full text of the sermon [here at the NY Times](#) and [here at the Vatican Radio website](#).

Further reading:

[Pope Francis at St. Patrick's ...](#) by [Michael Sean Winters](#) at the [National Catholic Register](#)

[Did Pope Francis Really Say Jesus Was a Failure? ...](#) by Jimmy Akin

Chapter 103: Why I remain Catholic

Why am I Catholic? Why am I not Protestant, or Adventist?

It's a current trend to post why one remains Catholic. There are many reasons to remain Catholic, but I think mine are mostly historical.

I believe that the first century Christians developed into the second century Christians, who developed into the third century Christians, and then into the 4th century Christians. If we look at the extra-biblical writings from each period, and compare them to the Bible, I think they are a) consistent with the Bible, and b) Catholic. In the first century, we see clear Sunday observance. In the second century, we see clear Trinitarianism and the development of Marian theology and Eucharistic theology. By the fourth century, we see Catholic clergy who celebrate Mass in a liturgical setting, keeping Sunday, teaching confession, having monks and nuns, and claiming to have the authority to define what is and isn't the true Christian faith, notably with two powerful examples – a) defining the Trinity and clarifying what was error and what was not, and b) setting the final Canon of Scripture, settling uncertainties and debates once and for all, choosing those books that they got their teaching from. All these things existed before, but being clarified as time goes by.

As time went by, teaching became clarified and better understood, as per John 16:13. We never see the original Church losing doctrine and then having to regain it, as groups like Adventism have. It all developed from small seeds into big trees.

We do not see Protestant theology, where it differs from Catholic theology, in this period, and unless we claim that an unknown group of people existed with these beliefs, but with no real historical record to support the claim, we're stuck with a developing Christianity that is distinctly Catholic.

There are parallels with Adventism – in the beginning of the Catholic Church, and in the beginning of Adventism, the faith existed as seeds, and there were no clear and unambiguous decisions. The big difference here lies in the fact that Adventism existed with those seeds only because it had chopped down the trees that had already grown, as had Protestantism before it. Both abandoned truth that was already established. There is no real demonstrable evidence that there was a similar break between the first century Christians and the 4th century Christians – that, unlike Adventism, was not a process of abandoning truth and regaining it, but a process of natural development of understanding with time.

I can fully understand if Adventists, and Protestants, reject the above, because I doubt they believe that the Catholic Church is the modern successor to the early Christians. Many Adventists probably believe that some sort of break did occur, and some of the alleged first century proto-Adventists or proto-Protestants experienced a loss of truth and developed into Catholicism. But I don't believe evidence for that exists; nor do I believe evidence for the continued existence of a group of "true Christians" of the proto-Adventist / proto-Protestant nature can be shown from historical evidence. Sure, there are all sorts of claims about trails of blood, Albigenians, Paulicians, etc., but really this

is just an attempt to identify groups outside of the Catholic Church and assign them a status that their actual history and actual beliefs show cannot be assigned to them (e.g. the Albigensians were gnostics, denounced marriage, and believed in two Gods, one evil God of the Old Testament, and one good God of the New Testament.)

The vast majority of Christian historians trace the development of the Christian faith through the real Church with real historical evidence. Those who are Protestant tend to ignore the particularly Catholic aspects of these people, because they don't understand how it can be. Those who are Catholic see their faith recorded in history from the start of Christianity.

Yes, we must acknowledge that no denomination is perfect, and nor is the Church. All contained sinners. Sinners abused the indulgence process and sold them inappropriately. There were corrupt popes, bishops, and priests. Yet all of this was the action of sinners, not Catholic theology, which was then what it was before and what it is today, albeit with clarifications that were needed from time to time. I must rest my faith in the Church that provided us with the Bible, because otherwise how would I know that there was any authority out there to clarify the truth? For me to know what God wants us to believe, I can either make it up, or I can trust that the Bible I have was guided in its compilation, in the centuries after it was written, by a reliable source guided to do so by the Holy Spirit. And if I choose the latter, the only group I can identify from reliable history is the 4th century Catholic Church. If I doubt them, then I end up at abandoning historical Christianity, abandoning Paul's writings, abandoning the Gospel of John, because I've made up my own theology and judged the Bible by it.

"I should not believe the gospel except as moved by the authority of the Catholic Church."

– St Augustine of Hippo, [Against the Epistle of Manichaeus Called Fundamental, 5.6](#)

Section 11: The Virgin Mary

Chapter 104: What Catholics Believe – Mary, the Virgin Mother of God

This post forms part of the **What Catholics Believe series**.

Luke 1:47-28 – [And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.](#)

Mary is a sore point when it comes to Catholics and Protestants. Some Protestants accuse us of worshipping Mary; Catholics think Protestants ignore her.

Certainly, Catholics do not worship Mary. Nor do we consider her to be a goddess. But what do we believe and what do we not believe?

It's also worth mentioning at this point that Mary is a symbol of the Church, and the first person to directly allow Jesus into her life. This is quite biblical – just look at Revelation 12:

Rev 12:1-2,5 – [And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. ... And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.](#)

A woman ... who gave birth to Jesus. Yes, the woman symbolises Israel, and the woman symbolises the Church. The woman symbolises multiple things, but at the core, the woman is the mother of Jesus. Only those in denial of Mary could not acknowledge this basic obvious symbol.

As the symbol of the Church, and as the first Christian, Mary is now what we will become. She birthed God into the world; we are called to bring God to others. She was sinless; we will be made spotless. She was taken body and soul into heaven; we will ultimately be resurrected and our bodies reunited with our souls in heaven.

Outline of this post:

1. Mary is the Mother of God
2. Mary, Ever Virgin
3. Mary the Immaculate Conception
4. Mary, assumed body and soul into heaven
5. Mary, Queen of Heaven
6. Mary, Woman and Mother
7. Mary the Ark of the New Covenant
8. Mary, the New Eve
9. Mary, intercessor for Christians

10. Mary, source of our salvation

1. Mary is the Mother of God

Let's start with the basics – Mary is Jesus' mother. Luke 1:43 explicitly calls Mary "*the mother of my Lord*".

Yet Jesus was God. So, logically, Mary was the mother of God.

Some Protestants will find that hard to accept, because they misunderstand what is meant. The problem is fairly easily resolved, however, if we look at who Jesus is. Jesus is one person with two natures. He is a divine person with a divine nature and a human nature. As a divine person, he is God. Mothers are mothers of persons, not mothers of their natures. We speak of "*my mother*" and "*your mother*", not of "*the mother of my human nature*". So, Mary being Jesus' mother means that Mary was the mother of a person who was God, and therefore the mother of God. The Greek "*theotokos*" (θεοτόκος) explains this more – Mary is the woman who carried God in her womb, and gave birth to God.

What Mary is not: she is not the originator of the 2nd Person of the Trinity; she is not older than God; she is not the mother of God the Father. She is the human mother of Jesus, who was God.

The reason Mary was declared by the Church to be the Mother of God in the 400's AD was because some people denied that Jesus was God. Some claimed that he was never God, while others claimed that he only became God later.

See these two YouTube videos for more:

[Debunking the arguments against Mary the Mother of God, part 1](#)

[Debunking the arguments against Mary the Mother of God, part 2](#)

Further reading:

[The Case for Calling Mary "Mother of God"](#)

2. Mary, Ever Virgin

Catholics believe that Mary remained a virgin all her life. The biblical evidence includes Luke 1:34:

Luke 1:34 – *Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?*

Mary is saying that at that time she was a virgin. However, it also indicates that she had planned to remain a virgin, in spite of her marriage to Joseph. Had she not planned this, her automatic assumption would have been, "*Ah, when I marry Joseph, he and I will produce a child, and this is what the angel means*". That is not her reaction. Only if she had intended to remain a virgin can her lack of comprehension regarding a pregnancy be explained adequately.

Protestants bring up two other points that need addressing – Mary was a virgin until she gave birth (Matthew 1:25), and Jesus had brothers (Matt 12:46; Matt 13:55; Mark 3:31–34; Mark 6:3; Luke 8:19–20; John 2:12; John 7:3–10; Acts 1:14; 1 Cor 9:5).

These points do not refute the Catholic position.

Mary remained a virgin until she gave birth – this doesn't mean that she didn't remain a virgin afterwards. In fact, assuming she did not remain a virgin afterwards is reading something into the text that isn't there. The word “until” in English is often used as a delimiting preposition – “*I was in England until I went to France*”. However, it does not work that way in the Bible, and that is why it is a case of reading into the text something that isn't there when people assume “until” means her virginity came to an end.

Six instances of an open-ended “until” in the Bible:

2 Samuel 6:23 – Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death.

Did Michal have a child after her death? Doubtful.

Psalm 72:7 – In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.

The Hebrew there is “*till there be no moon*”; the king symbolises God's reign, especially at the end of the world. Will the righteous stop flourishing and will peace no longer be abundant at the end of the world, if the moon ceases to exist? No.

Psalm 123:2 – Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us.

Will we cease to look to God and look elsewhere after he has had mercy on us? No.

1 Corinthians 15:25 – For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

Would he stop reigning after all enemies had been put under his feet? No. Until here is open-ended. αχρι (not the same as Matt 1:25) – Strong's G891.

1 Timothy 4:13 – Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

Were they supposed to stop reading, exhorting, and ignore doctrine after he came? No. Until here is open-ended. εως (same as Matt 1:25) – Strong's G2193.

Matthew 28:20 – Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Would Jesus no longer be with them after the end of the world? No. Until here is open-ended. εως (same as Matt 1:25) – Strong's G2193.

Like the Ark of the Covenant, Mary would not be touched, metaphorically, by men. And the following verse has been applied to Mary by Christians from the earliest times:

Ezekiel 44:1-2 – Then he brought me back the way of the gate of the outward sanctuary which looketh toward the east; and it was shut. Then said the LORD unto me; This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the LORD, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut.

Jesus' brethren?

Various people are named as Jesus' brethren in the Bible. Yet, if one looks carefully, one can show that Jesus' brethren actually had different parents.

Also, right throughout the Bible, those labelled as brothers or brethren are often not biological siblings. In Genesis 11:27 we see that Lot and Abraham were nephew and uncle, yet in Genesis 14:14, Lot is called Abraham's brother – adelphos (αδελφος) in the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint – this is the same word used in the New Testament for Jesus' brothers. The same αδελφος is used in Genesis 29:15 for the relationship between Jacob and Laban, also nephew and uncle (see verse 10.) In cases where the identity of "brothers" can be determined to be cousins, we might expect to find the Greek word for cousin used. But in Hebrew there was no separate word for cousins, and when such relationships were depicted, usually "brother" was used, with "son of my uncle" as a circumlocutory alternative. Those who translated the Old Testament into Greek chose to translate directly, and so they used the term αδελφος, brother (cf Gen 14:14, 29:15). Similarly in the New Testament. Translating from their own mother tongue, Aramaic, the Apostles likewise would have used αδελφος, as it was a direct translation from Aramaic, which had no word for "cousin".

In the links below, this is gone into in a lot more detail.

Further reading:

[Why did Mary remain a virgin after the birth of Jesus?](#)

[St. Jude and the "Brothers" of Jesus](#)

[Did Mary Have Other Children?](#)

[Was Mary an Unwed Mother?](#)

[Jesus Christ, the New Temple ... Mary as the Temple Gate](#)

[Catholic Encyclopedia: The Brethren of the Lord](#)

[Mary's Perpetual Virginity](#)

[Why is Mary Considered Ever-Virgin?](#)

[The Case for Mary's Perpetual Virginity](#)

["Brethren of the Lord"](#)

[Mary Had Other Children...? Or Did She?](#)

3. Mary the Immaculate Conception

Some Protestants teach that we are all either predestined to salvation or to damnation. Most Christians, Catholics included, teach that we are saved by grace alone, unable to obtain salvation by our own doing. God alone calls us, and God alone provides the grace by which we have the ability to respond to his call. Why, then, is it so hard to believe that God predestined Mary to be saved, and furthermore, kept free from sin? Do we not trust the power of God's grace?

The term “*Immaculate Conception*” has two parts. *Immaculate* – spotless, without a stain of sin. *Conception* – Mary was sinless from the moment of her conception, so she was free of original sin.

Biblically, the concept of Mary’s sinlessness comes from the concept that she was “*full of grace*”. The precise word in Luke 1:42 is “*kecharitomene*” (κεχαριτωμενη). It means more than just being given grace like the rest of us are. It indicates a past event with ongoing status. Mary was given grace, and made full with grace. To be full with grace means that she did not lose or lack or reject any grace given by God. To have not lost grace, to be filled with it, means the absence of sin, which results in the loss or absence of grace.

The two main arguments against Mary’s sinlessness are a) that she needed a saviour (Luke 1:47), and b) that all men have sinned (Romans 3:22-23).

Mary needed a saviour. No human, sinless by his/her own power, could bridge the gap between God and man. Mary still needed Jesus for that. And Mary was not sinless by her own power – she was preserved sinless because of the saving act of Jesus on the Cross, not in spite of it. By his death and resurrection, Jesus will change us all from sinners to spotless saints. So he did with Mary, who, without him, would have been a sinner.

All men have sinned? St Paul says this, yes, but he is clearly not including every single human being – after all, Jesus was a man and he did not sin. St Paul also states (Rom 9:11) that babies are without sin. What we all, other than Jesus, are – and babies and Mary are included here – are creatures in need of salvation. But not all men have sinned, by St Paul’s own admission, which means he was stating a generic fact in Romans 3, which was not an absolute all-encompassing statement.

Mary’s sinlessness was to provide a sacred vessel for Jesus by which to enter the world as a man, and a gift to her for her saying Yes to God.

Like Mary, we will too be washed clean of sin, with no stain remaining.

A further interesting fact is that after Jesus’ birth, Jesus’ blood continued to circulate in her body until she died, due to the concept of microchimerism – cells from fetuses get into their mothers’ circulation, and may remain in the mother for the rest of her life. Mary had the literal Blood of Christ in her body. This supports the need for both the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption.

Further reading:

[Immaculate Conception and Assumption](#)

[What is the Immaculate Conception?](#)

[Why Is the Immaculate Conception Important?](#)

[Mary’s Assumption Makes Sense in Light of Microchimerism](#)

4. Mary, assumed body and soul into heaven

Catholics believe that after Mary died (and many believe she was spared death as well, although

that is not Catholic dogma) her body was taken up into heaven and reunited with her soul.

The dogma states that “*the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.*” ([Munificentissimus Deus, Pope Pius XII](#))

In the Bible, Enoch and Elijah, and possible Moses, were also assumed into heaven. So this concept is not biblically impossible.

Jesus’ body also ended up in heaven – he rose from the dead, and then ascended into heaven. However, there is a big difference here: Jesus ascended into heaven by his own power; Mary was, like Enoch and Elijah, taken up by the power of God.

Biblically, the Assumption is hinted at in Revelation 12, and the early Christians believed in it.

Lastly, Mary’s Assumption is a precursor to our own eventual bodily resurrection.

Further reading:

[Ten Facts About the Assumption of Mary That You May Not Know](#)

[Did the Virgin Mary Die? The Answer May Surprise You](#)

[Mary’s Assumption Makes Sense in Light of Microchimerism](#)

5. Mary, Queen of Heaven

From early on, Christians saw the parallels between Mary and the Davidic Queens. The mother of the king was considered to be the queen, and she had significant influence, as can be seen with the case of Solomon and Bathsheba:

1 Kings 2:20 – Then she said, I desire one small petition of thee; I pray thee, say me not nay. And the king said unto her, Ask on, my mother: for I will not say thee nay.

The fact that there was idolatry involved in the case of Asherah, a pagan goddess, who was called Queen of Heaven, does not nullify the rest of the Bible’s parallels.

Luke 1:31-33 – And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Further reading:

[Mary’s Queenship](#)

[Mary, Mother of God and Queen of Heaven](#)

[Mary Queen of Heaven – the Bible Tells Me So](#)

6. Mary, Woman and Mother

John 2:4 – Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet

come.

That is unfortunately a bad translation. It really means “*What has that got to do with you or me?*” I.e. Jesus is saying that it’s not his or his mother’s job to ensure there is enough wine.

Also, in modern English, we do not address woman as “*Woman*”. “*Woman, where is my food??*” No ... but we do call them “*Lady*” sometimes as a title, although it’s more often something like “*Lady, you dented my car!!?*”. “*Madam*” is often used to speak of women of inferior morals. However, generally, “*Ma’am*” is a way to address a woman with respect – and it is in this way that Jesus addresses his mother.

John 19:26-27 – *When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.*

No disrespect there at all.

Important in that verse is that a) it is significant in that the Bible bothers to record it as one of Jesus’ last sayings on the Cross, and b) it indicates that Jesus was giving Mary as a mother to his beloved disciple, John.

Why did Jesus give Mary to John? Normally the eldest son would be responsible for the care of the mother; if the eldest son died, the job would be given to the next son. Jesus, according to Catholic teaching and the Bible, had no siblings – Mary remained a virgin all her life. So Jesus had no siblings to take care of Mary after his death, resurrection, and ascension. Also, because this event is given the emphasis and importance it is given as one of Jesus’ final statements on the Cross, even the early Christians found it significant – Jesus gave his mother to mankind.

Protestants will sometimes argue that Mary had other children, and that she was only a virgin until she gave birth to Jesus. I’ll deal with that error lower down, but if they are right, then giving Mary to John has even more significance – Jesus bypassed all his siblings, who would normally have taken on the task of caring for her, and gave her to John. That is highly unusual, making the universal motherhood of Mary even more pronounced.

Further reading:

[Was Jesus Dissing His Mother When He Called Her “Woman”?](#)

7. Mary the Ark of the New Covenant

One argument Protestants present is that Mary is hardly mentioned in the Bible. Yet that isn’t entirely true – there are several explicit mentions of her, but there are others that are not as obvious. These passages show us Mary contrasted in the New Testament with the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament.

In short, both Mary and the Ark were where God’s glory was physically located – the Word of God in Mary’s womb. The Ark contained several items (Heb 9:4) – the nourishment from God to the

Israelites (manna), and the symbol of the Aaronic priesthood, Aaron's rod, and the word of God given to Moses on stone tablets. God overshadowed and dwelled in both the Ark (Exodus 40) and Mary (Luke 1). Mary had in her womb Jesus, who became for us the bread of life, who became the eternal high priest of the order of Melchizedek, the Word of God himself. The Ark and Mary both then travelled to Judah (2 Sam 6, Luke 1). King David, dressed in a priest's girdle, and John the Baptist, son of a priest and a future priest, leapt with joy in front of the Ark/Mary. Both King David and Elizabeth rejoiced in front of the Ark / Mary, which/who both remained for 3 months. Then both the Ark and Mary went back to Jerusalem, to the Temple.

Further reading:

[4 Biblical Reasons Mary Is The New Ark of the Covenant](#)

[The Virgin Mary as the Ark of the New Covenant](#)

[Mary, the Ark of the New Covenant](#)

8. Mary, the New Eve

St Irenaeus, the disciple of St Polycarp, the disciple of the Apostle John, wrote, around 202 AD, in his *Against Heresies*:

In accordance with this design, Mary the Virgin is found obedient, saying, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to your word." (Luke 1:38) But Eve was disobedient; for she did not obey when as yet she was a virgin. And even as she, having indeed a husband, Adam, but being nevertheless as yet a virgin (for in Paradise "they were both naked, and were not ashamed," (Genesis 2:25) inasmuch as they, having been created a short time previously, had no understanding of the procreation of children: for it was necessary that they should first come to adult age, and then multiply from that time onward), having become disobedient, was made the cause of death, both to herself and to the entire human race; so also did Mary, having a man betrothed [to her], and being nevertheless a virgin, by yielding obedience, become the cause of salvation, both to herself and the whole human race. And on this account does the law term a woman betrothed to a man, the wife of him who had betrothed her, although she was as yet a virgin; thus indicating the back-reference from Mary to Eve, because what is joined together could not otherwise be put asunder than by inversion of the process by which these bonds of union had arisen; so that the former ties be cancelled by the latter, that the latter may set the former again at liberty. And it has, in fact, happened that the first compact looses from the second tie, but that the second tie takes the position of the first which has been cancelled. For this reason did the Lord declare that the first should in truth be last, and the last first. (Matthew 19:30, Matthew 20:16) And the prophet, too, indicates the same, saying, "instead of fathers, children have been born unto you." For the Lord, having been born "the First-begotten of the dead," (Revelation 1:5) and receiving into His bosom the ancient fathers, has regenerated them into the life of God, He having been made Himself the beginning of those that live, as Adam became the beginning of those who die. (1 Corinthians 15:20-22) Wherefore also Luke, commencing the genealogy with the Lord, carried it back to Adam, indicating that it was He who regenerated them into the Gospel of life, and not they Him. And thus also it was that the knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve had bound fast through unbelief, this did the virgin Mary set free through faith.

Further reading:

[Mary, the New Eve](#)

[Early Church Fathers on Mary as the New Eve](#)

[6 Biblical Reasons Mary Is the “New Eve”](#)

9. Mary, intercessor for Christians

Christ is our only mediator, says the Bible. The Bible also uses the term “*intercession*” when speaking of Christ (Heb 7:25). The terms can be used as synonyms in English, and that is how Catholics often use them – as synonyms. So do Protestants:

Quite simply, intercessory prayer is the act of praying on behalf of others. The role of mediator in prayer was prevalent in the Old Testament, in the cases of Abraham, Moses, David, Samuel, Hezekiah, Elijah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. Christ is pictured in the New Testament as the ultimate intercessor, and because of this, all Christian prayer becomes intercession since it is offered to God through and by Christ.

– Got Questions: What is intercessory prayer?

We are all able to pray for each other, and the Bible teaches the value of intercessory prayer.

1 Tim 2:1 – *I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.*

Adventists and others who believe the dead are unconscious in the grave claim that the saints cannot pray for us because they are not in heaven. However, this is based on an erroneous understanding of the biblical afterlife. See Chapters 62-66 dealing with this topic.

Are we allowed to pray to Mary?

Yes, we are. Nothing in the Bible prohibits the addressing of those in heaven; in fact, in several places, angels in heaven are addressed by humans – Psalm 103:20-21. Requests are asked of angels – Gen 19:15-21. Angels could speak to humans from heaven – Gen 21:17-18 – which means that they should be able to hear us from there. Those in heaven know what we are up to – 1 Samuel 28:18 – Samuel knows what Saul has not done; see also Rev 19:6; Luke 15:7-10 indicates that those in heaven, in the presence of the angels, rejoice when sinners repent.

In Revelation 5:8 and 8:3-4, the angels offer the prayers of humans to God. In Revelation 6:9-10 we see the souls of the dead praying to God. If we may address those in heaven, and if they know what is happening on earth, and if prayer by those in heaven is possible, then we can ask them to pray for us.

Is praying to Mary not worship?

No. For low church Protestants, the average worship consists of prayer and singing hymns and a sermon. Protestant worship is modelled on the synagogue. For Catholics, that does still form part of

what we call worship, but the ultimate worship service in Catholicism and Orthodoxy is the Mass. We are in the very presence of the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. For Catholics, worship is modelled on the Temple. [Jesus, as a first century Jew, would immediately recognise in the Mass many elements of Temple worship.](#)

So, when we have the sacrifice of Calvary as our highest form of communal worship, everything else is synagogue-like in comparison. Yes, we pray, we read the Bible, and we sing pretty badly. But these things are lesser forms of communal worship.

Pray, in English, isn't limited to worship. Pray simply means to ask. We explicitly differentiate between the worshipful prayer we offer to God, and the non-worship form of prayer we direct to angels and saints. If English (and Hebrew and Greek) had developed separate words for these two actions, we would use them. But in all three languages, the same words are used for both. That can understandably become confusing for Protestants, who only address God, and never the angels and saints (unless they're singing one of the psalms that addresses angels, but then they don't notice.)

Worship is also an act of the intellect and an act of the will, not an act of body posture (kneeling, bowing, which are all legitimately done to humans in the Bible) or vocalisation. If bowing is done with the intent of worship, then it is worship. If it is not done with the intent of worship, then it is not worship. The same applies to prayer.

Further reading:

[Why Invocation of the Saints is Essentially Different From the Sin of Necromancy](#)

[Biblical Evidence For Invocation of Angels For Intercessory Purposes / Asking For Dead Men's Intercession, and Their Prayers For Us](#)

[Biblical Evidence For Saints in Heaven Being Aware of Earthly Events](#)

10. Mary, source of our salvation

One of the more blasphemous-sounding concepts is the idea that Mary is the source of our salvation. Yet in the early Church we see this concept taught. However, if correctly understood, it should be no problem.

Only Christ saves us, right? No, not according to the Bible. Yes, Christ saves us. But the Bible also speaks of secondary means of salvation – those things Christ uses to save us – as saving us. He is the primary source of salvation, but he uses faith (Luke 7:50), grace (Acts 15:11), baptism (1 Peter 3:21), and humans to save us (Jude 1:23, 1 Timothy 4:16).

Soon-to-be Father Joe Heschmeyer points out a useful analogy, one commonly found in medicine when talking about the cause of death: Lee Harvey Oswald killed Kennedy; a bullet killed Kennedy. Both make perfect sense, and both are true.

When we say that Mary saves us, we do not mean that Mary suffered and died for our sins. What Mary does do is this: she brought Jesus into the world when she said “*be it unto me according to thy word*” (Luke 1:38); she prays for us, and who is more righteous than she is – “*The effectual*

fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16).

Further reading:

[Is it Idolatry to say that Mary Saves Us?](#)

Conclusion

Mary is, for Christians, a devout and holy example to follow (cf 1 Cor 11:1). She is our mother, our queen. She was kept pure by God, and never touched by men. She brought Christ into the world, as his mother, and is the Ark of the New Covenant. She said yes where Eve said no.

Chapter 105: Mary, Mother of God

The following debate on alt.religion.christian.roman-catholic shows how people often misunderstand the concept of Mary being the Mother of God.

Adventist: I understand that. She gave birth to the human, Jesus Christ which was God manifest in the flesh. But once again, since God has always existed, he had no mother.

Catholic: Come on mike, give it up. God became man, fully man, and Mary is his earthly mother.

Adventist: Earthly yes. She played no role in His divine nature. Mary being his earthly mother does not make her the mother of God.

The logic is that if she was indeed his mother, and he was indeed God, then she was the mother of God, because the person she was mother to was God.

“Earthly mother of God” is perhaps a more explanatory title. Theotokos is the most explanatory – she who carried God in her womb.

Adventist: You guys want to blend his humanity with his divine nature for no other reason than to elevate Mary to the status you do.

Actually, the original reason was to reinforce the divine nature of Christ. The idea arose that the person Mary gave birth to was not God, and only later became God. If Mary was the mother of the human person of the Christ – Christotokos – but the divine person only came later, she could not be Theotokos, but only Christotokos. Orthodox Christianity reinforced the teaching that there was always only one person – not a human person that later acquired a God person within him. The title Theotokos or Mother of God was simply to show that the person Mary was mother to was God, not a non-divine person who later attained / acquired Godhood.

Adventist: For Mary to be “mother of God” she would have to be a god herself.

In Catholic/Orthodox theology, it means she was mother to a person, and that person was God when he was in her womb.

Don’t make the mistake of rejecting a teaching considered to be biblical and shared by virtually all Christians – Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant – just because the title means something to you that is unacceptable outside of its original context. If you agree with the rest of Christianity on the divinity of Christ at the point when he was still in Mary’s womb, you can’t logically deny that she was the earthly human mother of a person who was fully God in her womb. That is the meaning of the title, so you can’t logically deny the title. You can refuse to use it because of other reasons, but not because it is contrary to your beliefs (if you do share the beliefs of most Protestants on that issue). If you refuse to use it because, in some circles it seems to say that Mary is the originator of Christ’s deity, then you are still in agreement with Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Protestantism, because they reject that idea as well. Your real disagreement is not in a title, but in the way Mary is treated.

Chapter 106: More on the Mother of God

In the 2nd century we see the development of Adoptionism, teaching that Jesus became God at the time of his baptism.

Theodotus claimed that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit as a mortal man, and though later adopted by God upon baptism, was not himself God until after his resurrection.

– From Wikipedia’s article on [Theodotus of Byzantium](#)

Paul’s teaching is a form of Monarchianism, which emphasized the oneness of God. Paul taught that Jesus was born a mere man, but that at his baptism he was infused with the divine Logos or word of God. Hence, Jesus was seen not as God-become-man but as man-become-God.

– From Wikipedia’s article on [Paul of Samosata](#)

“Having been anointed by the Holy Spirit he received the title of the anointed (i.e. Christos), suffering in accordance with his nature, working wonders in accordance with grace. For in fixity and resoluteness of character he likened himself to God; and having kept himself free from sin was united with God, and was empowered to grasp as it were the power and authority of wonders. By these he was shown to possess over and above the will, one and the same activity (with God), and won the title of Redeemer and Saviour of our race.”

– Wikipedia’s article on [Paul of Samosata](#) [quoting Paul of Samosata]:

It was during the 300’s AD that Nestorianism came about. Apollinarius was one of the first to lay the groundwork for that idea. At the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD Nestorius said, “*I can never allow that a child of three months old was God.*”

Nestorianism emphasized the human nature of Jesus at the expense of the divine. The Council denounced Patriarch Nestorius’ teaching as erroneous. Nestorius taught that Mary, the mother of Jesus gave birth to a man, Jesus, not God, the Logos (The Word, Son of God). The Logos only dwelled in Christ, as in a Temple (Christ, therefore, was only Theophoros, Greek for the “Bearer of God”).

– Wikipedia’s article on the [Council of Ephesus](#)

The next three are quotes from Nestorius:

Holy scripture, wherever it recalls the Lord’s economy, speaks of the birth and suffering not of the godhead but of the humanity of Christ, so that the holy virgin is more accurately termed mother of Christ than mother of God. Hear these words that the gospels proclaim: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham.” It is clear that God the Word was not the son of David. Listen to another witness if you will: “Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called the Christ. ” Consider a further piece of evidence: “Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, she was found to be with child of the holy Spirit.” But who would ever consider that the godhead of the only begotten was a creature of the Spirit?

– Nestorius’ [letter to St Cyril](#)

(Hence also Christ calls himself the lord and son of David: “‘What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he?’ They said to him, ‘The son of David.’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘How is it then that David inspired by the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, “The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand”?’”. He said this as being indeed son of David according to the flesh, but his Lord according to his godhead.) The body therefore is the temple of the deity of the Son, a temple which is united to it in a high and divine conjunction, so that the divine nature accepts what belongs to the body as its own. Such a confession is noble and worthy of the gospel traditions. But to use the expression “accept as its own” as a way of diminishing the properties of the conjoined flesh, birth, suffering and entombment, is a mark of those whose minds are led astray ...
– Nestorius’ [letter to St Cyril](#)

For it is necessary for such as are attracted by the name “propriety” to make God the Word share, because of this same propriety, in being fed on milk, in gradual growth, in terror at the time of his passion and in need of angelical assistance.
– Nestorius’ [letter to St Cyril](#)

It is debated whether or not Nestorius actually taught Nestorianism, but whether or not he did, the concept of Nestorianism was rejected.

The outcome was that it was held that Mary gave birth to a person who was fully man and fully God, so in that sense she could be called the mother of God, because the person she was mother to was not separated from God the Son. The next council clarified this more explicitly. In no way did the originators of this definition believe that Mary was the source of any aspect of Christ’s divinity, and the title was intended to describe the nature of Christ, not teach any sort of heretical notion of Mary existing before Abraham like Christ did, or being an originator of divinity.

Following the holy Fathers we teach with one voice that the Son [of God] and our Lord Jesus Christ is to be confessed as one and the same [Person], that he is perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood, very God and very man, of a reasonable soul and [human] body consisting, consubstantial with the Father as touching his Godhead, and consubstantial with us as touching his manhood; made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted; begotten of his Father before the worlds according to his Godhead; but in these last days for us men and for our salvation born [into the world] of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God according to his manhood. This one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son [of God] must be confessed to be in two natures, unconfusedly, immutably, indivisibly, inseparably [united], and that without the distinction of natures being taken away by such union, but rather the peculiar property of each nature being preserved and being united in one Person and subsistence, not separated or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Prophets of old time have spoken concerning him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ hath taught us, and as the Creed of the Fathers hath delivered to us.

– [Definition of the Council of Chalcedon](#)

A few relevant questions for those who claim that Mary was not the mother of God in the Incarnation:

1. Do you believe that Jesus was God?

2. Do you believe that Jesus was God during the period he was in Mary's uterus, e.g. when John the Baptist leapt in Elizabeth's uterus?
3. Do you believe that Mary was Jesus' mother?
4. What was Mary mother to, if Jesus was God at the time of her pregnancy?
5. If she was mother to Jesus as man, but not Jesus as God, you're rejecting what the vast majority of Christians – Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant, have taught for centuries to be the biblical faith.

Jesus was God in Mary's uterus. Mary was his mother. She was not the mother of the Godhead. She did not pre-exist Jesus. But her son was God, and she was his mother – the mother of God incarnate.

Chapter 107: Mary's children

Adventists are true Protestants in the sense that they protest whatever is Catholic. Catholics believe that the mother of Jesus, Mary, had no other children apart from Jesus. Some Adventists, therefore, make it an article of faith, a doctrine, that Mary did indeed have other children.

Nowhere does the Bible state that she had other children. Nowhere does the Bible state that she had sex with Joseph – ever.

The Adventist Review has an article by Angel Manuel Rodriguez from the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference entitled “*Jesus’ Family Ties*”, which asks the question “*Were the brothers of Jesus mentioned in the Bible sons of Joseph and Mary?*”

The answer is a well-balanced look at the facts, and says that this is, for Adventists, a historical issue, not a theological one.

The problem is that Adventists have turned it into a theological one in order to dispute Catholic teaching. Catholicism influences Adventism more than one would think.

One important criticism of the article is that it states “*we are told that Joseph knew Mary, that is to say, had sexual intercourse with her, after the birth of Jesus (Matt. 1:25).*”

Matt 1:25 reads as follows:

Matt 1:25 – *And he knew her not till she brought forth her first born son: and he called his name Jesus.*

So the article is not accurate there – it is not reporting what the Bible tells us, but rather it is interpreting the Bible according to the author’s own tradition. The Bible does not tell us that Joseph had sex with Mary after Jesus’ birth. It says that he did not have sex with her before his birth. The specific use of the term “*until*” here does not imply what most of us understand by the term “*until*” when we commonly use it in our everyday English speech. I say “*I will wait here until I get fetched*” and imply that after I have been fetched, I will no longer be waiting there.

But we can also use the word “*until*” this way: “They won’t repossess my car until I stop making payments.” Nothing tells us that they (the bank, etc.) will repossess the car after I stop making payments. I could stop making payments because I have paid everything, and I own the car fully.

The Bible uses the word “*until*” in the both ways.

Gen 24:19 – *And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking.*

After they are done drinking, obviously she would stop drawing water for them.

Acts 23:1 – *And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived*

in all good conscience before God until this day.

I doubt Paul intended doing otherwise after that day, so it's an open-ended until. Nothing changed when the time specified by "until" ended.

Judges 4:24 – *And the hand of the children of Israel prospered, and prevailed against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.*

Did they stop prevailing against him after they killed him? To say no would be a strange answer.

The same goes for Mary. "Until" doesn't necessarily mean that things changed after the specified time.

Another question worth thinking about: When Gabriel told Mary she would have a child, she knew she would shortly get married, and so the obvious conclusion would be that she would have a child after she got married. So why her response? She said "*How shall this be done, because I know not man?*" (Luke 1:34) It makes sense only if her intent was to not know man, now or ever. If she had not yet known man, but would once she was married – and clearly marriage was the intent at the time – there would have been no such confusion.

Chapter 108: Jesus' brothers and sisters

Here I'll address the brothers of Jesus named in the Bible.

We've seen that the Greek word "*adelphos*" ("*brother*" in Mark 6:3) can mean close relative or cousin. Laban and Jacob (Gen 29:15) are called brothers (*adelphos* in the Septuagint), yet were not siblings; similarly Lot and Abraham are called brothers in Gen 14:14, yet they were not siblings. That it is also used this way in the New Testament to refer to "*brothers*" of Jesus is undeniable.

Mark 6:3 – *Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.*

One key to understanding who these brothers were lies with the women present at Jesus' crucifixion.

Matt 27:56 – *Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.*

Here we see two of the brothers mentioned, and their mother was Mary. Odd, that Mary should be listed as their mother, and not Jesus' mother, given the circumstances, if this Mary were Jesus' mother. This indicates that this Mary, mother of James and Joses, was not Jesus' mother.

John 19:25 – *Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.*

So now there are three Marys present – Jesus' mother, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

Either James and Joses were the sons of Jesus' mother, or of Mary the wife of Cleophas.

James and Jude were brothers, as indicated above in Mark 6:3, and also in Jude 1:1, as well as in Acts 1:13.

Jude 1:1 – *Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called*

Acts 1:13 – *And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.*

But here James is the son of Alphaeus.

In Greek, the Aramaic name Alphaeus was translated as either Alphaeus or Cleophas.

If you put the above together, you get James, Joses, and Jude being the sons of Mary, wife of Alphaeus/Cleophas. This shows that at least three of the "*brothers*" (*adelphoi*) in Mark 6:3 are not

immediate siblings of Jesus, but rather close relatives. First cousins, in fact, because this Mary is Jesus' mother's sister (or likely sister-in-law).

Simon's relationship here isn't explicitly explained in the Bible, but if the Bible groups him with James, Joses, and Jude, and these three are not Mary's children, it makes sense that he's the same type of "*brother*" (*adelphos*) to Jesus as they are.

Lastly, James the Apostle is called the brother of Jesus in Gal 1:19:

Gal 1:19 – *But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.*

There were two Apostles called James:

- James, brother of John, the son of Zebedee (Matt 10:2)
- James, brother of Jude (Luke 6:16), the son of Alpheus/Cleophas – Luke 6:15

So James the brother of Jesus, if Paul is right about him being an Apostle, was not a biological sibling of Jesus.

That, then, leaves Mary, Jesus' mother, with no other named children in the Bible.

Further reading:

[Did Mary Have Other Children?](#) ... by Joe Heschmeyer

[St. Jude and the "Brothers" of Jesus](#) ... by Joe Heschmeyer

[Brethren of the Lord](#) ... Catholic Answers

[Genealogy of the Brethren](#) ... by Bob Stanley

Chapter 109: Was Jesus the son of Mary?

These days one comes across a rather strange idea that Jesus was not genetically related to his mother, Mary. Christians believe that he was not genetically related to Joseph, since he was born of a virgin, but he was truly Mary's son, and she was truly his mother.

The idea that Mary was merely a surrogate host for an unrelated human is propagated mainly in anti-Catholic circles, such as Adventism, in order to justify their rejection of the concept that Mary is the Mother of God.

Catholics and Orthodox call Mary the Mother of God, or Theotokos, because the person she was mother to was indeed God. In no way does it mean that she was the mother of the Godhead, or the originator of his divinity. It simply means that, as her son, in her womb and afterwards, he was fully God, and didn't become God at a later stage in his life, as Nestorians believe. The vast majority of Protestant denominations accept this as truth ... some, however, object to the title "Mother of God" – mainly due to a lack of understanding of what it really means.

Was Jesus really a descendant of David? Was that meant to be biologically, or merely a legal issue?

If Jesus was the seed of Eve who was to crush Satan's head, he had to be biologically descended from her.

Rom 1:3 – Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh

Gal 3:16 – Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

2 Tim 2:8 – Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel

Heb 2:16 – For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

We can believe that ... or we can believe this:

Rom 1:3 (RPV) – Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made like the seed of David according to the requirements of the law*

Gal 3:16 (RPV) – Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to the likeness of thy seed, which is Christ.*

2 Tim 2:8 (RPV) – Remember that Jesus Christ, likeness of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel*

Heb 2:16 (RPV) – For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the appearance of the seed of Abraham.*

*RPV: Revised Protestant Version

The whole idea that Jesus was not a biological descendant of Mary is just a ruse to escape from the complete Catholic/Orthodox explanation of the Biblical evidence.

It is a biblical fact that Mary was Jesus' mother – she is called that in many places. So either she was the mother of his entire person, or he was two persons, and she was the mother of the human person. Catholicism and Orthodoxy and Protestantism are united in rejecting the idea that he was two persons – the neo-Nestorian claim is limited to a few groups and individuals who haven't come to grips with the evidence and the arguments around this issue.

Elizabeth calls her the “*mother of my Lord*” ... by the neo-Nestorian argument made above, she was wrong, and Mary was either not the mother, or her Lord was not yet God.

The idea that Jesus was not a biological child of Mary is a novelty not supported by the Bible, and merely a reactionary stance.

Chapter 110: Mary, the Ark of the New Covenant

In the Old Testament, the Ark of the Covenant contained the glory of God. In the New Testament, the Ark of the New Covenant contained God himself in the flesh.

Important parallels regarding the content of the Ark:

- Manna – Eucharist (Jesus' body and blood)
- Rod of Aaron – Rod of Jesse (Jesus)
- 10 Commandments – Gospel

One of the most striking parallels in Scripture is 2 Samuel 6 and Luke 1, which have so many parallel phrases one has to be blind or stubborn not to see the link between the Ark of the Covenant and Mary.

In Revelation 11-12 we see the Ark of the Covenant in heaven, followed by a vision of a woman, who gave birth to Jesus ... obviously Mary, who Revelation indicates symbolises Israel and the Church.

Verse in 2 Samuel 6	2 Samuel 6	Luke 1	Verse in Luke 1
2	David arose and went	Mary arose and went	39
1-11	Ark travelled to Judea	Mary travelled to Judea	39
11	Ark stayed there for 3 months	Mary stayed there for 3 months	56
9	David said "How shall the ark of the LORD come to me?"	Elizabeth said "whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"	43
15	David shouted with joy before the Ark	Elizabeth shouted with joy before the Ark	42
14	David leapt with joy before the Ark	John leapt with joy before the Ark	43
11-18	"Blessed" x3	"Blessed" x3	39-45
12; see also 1 Kings 8:9-11	Ark returns and ends up in Jerusalem	Mary returns and ends up in Jerusalem	56; see also Luke 2:21-22

Further reading:

[4 Biblical Reasons Mary Is The New Ark of the Covenant](#) ... St Peter's List

[Mary, the Ark of the New Covenant](#) ... by Joe Heschmeyer

Chapter 111: You are Theotokos, we are theotokoi

You are Θεοτόκος, we are θεοτόκοι
You are Θεοτόκος

Where the name Θεοτόκος (Theotokos) comes from

In 431 AD, the Council of Ephesus debated the teaching that Jesus was not truly God, and that God the Son was not truly man. The Patriarch of Constantinople, Nestorius, had taught that Jesus was two persons with two natures – a divine person with a divine nature, and a separate human person with a human nature. At the Council he said, “*I can never allow that a child of three months old was God.*” Opposing him were bishop St Memnon of Ephesus and Pope St Cyril the Great of Alexandria, supported by Pope St Celestine of Rome, who died before the council began. The Nestorian teaching was formally condemned at this Council, and the official teaching of the Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Churches, and most Protestants today is that Jesus is one person, with two natures – a human nature and a divine nature.

To express that truth, the Council of Ephesus stated that Mary was truly the Mother of God. Nestorianism taught that Mary gave birth to only a man, and not the Logos, God the Son, and that God the Son merely dwelt within Jesus the man. It taught that the human and divine natures of Christ were each found in two separate persons, and the person born to Mary had only a human nature, and was not the Logos. They called Mary the Christotokos (Χριστοτόκος) – Mother of Christ, and they rejected the idea that she was Theotokos, Mother of God.

The Council taught that the person to whom Mary gave birth was truly God, not merely a man who was later indwelt by God the Son.

Many today get confused by the term “Mother of God” and think that it means Catholics teach that Mary is the mother of the Godhead – but that is not the case. It is not the Godhead, but the Incarnate Logos, of which Mary is mother. The term simply teaches that the Word himself was born of Mary, something most Christians – Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant – believe. In the words of St Athanasius of Alexandria:

As the flesh was born of Mary, the Mother of God, so we say that he, the Word, was himself born of Mary

– Discourses against the Arians, Discourse iii, section 33, see also iii.14,29, iv.32

The [definition of the Council of Chalcedon](#) states:

*So, following the saintly fathers, we all with one voice teach the confession of one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and a body; consubstantial with the Father as regards his divinity, and the same consubstantial with us as regards his humanity; like us in all respects except for sin; begotten before the ages from the Father as regards his divinity, and in the last days the same for us and for our salvation from Mary, the virgin **God-bearer** as regards his humanity; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, acknowledged in two natures which undergo no*

confusion, no change, no division, no separation; at no point was the difference between the natures taken away through the union, but rather the property of both natures is preserved and comes together into a single person and a single subsistent being; he is not parted or divided into two persons, but is one and the same only-begotten Son, God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ, just as the prophets taught from the beginning about him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ himself instructed us, and as the creed of the fathers handed it down to us.

Most modern Nestorians live in Iraq today, and their Patriarch resides in the USA.

The word Theotokos comes from the Greek Θεός = God, and τόκος = childbirth. Therefore the word is translated as “God-bearer” – or more eloquently, “she who bore God in her womb” or “she who birthed God into the world.” This makes the real meaning behind the name “Mother of God” a lot less confusing and controversial.

We are θεοτόκοι

In a non-biological sense, every Christian is also a theotokos, a God-bearer. All Marian titles teach us something about Christ, because Mary points us to Christ (“**His mother saith unto the servants, 'Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.'**” John 2:5, KJV) and Jesus Christ is the focus of our faith.

But it also teaches us about ourselves – Catholics regard Mary as the prototype follower of Christ. Her virginity represents the purity the Bible tells us to live up to. Her immaculate conception shows us our final state when our fallen nature is perfected by Christ. Her assumption into heaven depicts our future glory when our bodies and souls are united in heaven and spent eternity with God. And her role as God-bearer shows us in an intimate way how we are to personally bring Christ into the world for others. Jesus is the light of the world, and we are the bearers of that light, and he tells us not to hide that light (Matt 5:15.) We are ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20.)

We are truly theotokoi (θεοτόκοι) because we bring Christ into the world to be experienced by others!

The end

I hope you enjoyed reading this book, and that it helped you understand Catholicism and Seventh-day Adventism better, whether or not either of those is your faith.

May God bless you in your walk with him.